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SKETCH OF A POLITICAL TOUR

THROUGH
ROCHESTER, CHATHAM, MAID-
STONE, GRAVESEND, &c.

INCLUDING
REFLECTIONS.

ON THE
TEMPERS AND DISPOSITIONS OF THE INHA-
BITANTS OF THOSE PLACES,

AND ON
THE PROGRESS OF THE SOCIETIES INSTITUTED FOR
THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING A PARLIAMENTARY
REFORM.

By JOHN GALE JONES. R

PART THE FIRST.

"Laudatur ab his culpatur ab illis."

"He is praised by some, and condemned by others."

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1796.

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SKETCH

POLITICAL TOUR

ROBERT WESTER, CHATHAM, MAINE
STOCK, GRAVESEND, &c.

REPLACEMENTS



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PREFACE.

A MAN desirous of introducing himself to notice, easily persuades himself that he deserves attention, and rarely perceives his mistake until it be too late to profit by the discovery. The best corrective of an author's vanity, and at the same time the most satisfactory mode of decision, will be to let him write; since his claims on public favour will generally be proportionate to the encouragement he receives, and the only efficacious remedy for arrogant presumption is neglect and inattention. I confess I am not without the pleasing, though vain expectation, that the following hasty
Sketch,

Sketch, notwithstanding its numerous and visible defects, will escape the too severe animadversions of *modern* criticism; and *I know* there are a few, united by friendship and allied from principle, who will receive with kindness, and even with satisfaction, any thing which comes from the pen of

JOHN GALE JONES.

Boswell Court,
6th July, 1796.

S K E T C H
O F A
P O L I T I C A L T O U R, &c.

I WAS upon the point of quitting town, and retiring, for some time at least, from the busy scenes of active exertion, when I was asked by the London Corresponding Society, if I would accept the office of Deputy to visit the various Societies in the Country, and enquire into their actual situation. Ill health, a recent disappointment, and an inclination to travel, together with a high sense of the importance of such an undertaking, induced me to accept so flattering a proposal. Accordingly, on Saturday, the 6th of February, 1796, I sat off, accompanied by the Secretary, to the Blossoms Inn, Lawrence-lane, where I took a place
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in the Rochester coach, which was to depart the next morning. Perhaps the sensations which are excited in the mind of every person who is unused to travelling are always similar to those which I then experienced. The love of novelty, however powerful an ingredient in the human disposition, yields for a while to the gloom of parting friendship, and the traveller, like the schoolboy, with a heavy sigh bids a melancholy adieu to his long-accustomed home. Yet there were additional motives to rouse my attention, and urge my most serious reflections. I was about to enter upon a new and important duty; to undertake a task which demanded the utmost circumspection, and required the most tranquil deliberation. I was to venture myself among strange characters and in strange places, where personal attachment might be little regarded, and principles neglected or forgotten.

In the pursuit of this difficult, yet necessary undertaking, it would be necessary for me to surmount prejudices and remove apprehensions, and to counteract and oppose with success the artful machinations of those who had lately scattered terror and alarm around the land, and represented the friends of Peace and Reform as a lawless banditti of plunderers and desperadoes! It was a serious, it
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was a solemn undertaking. It required no ordinary abilities, I was conscious of my deficiency; it required the utmost intrepidity; I trembled lest, through the frailty of human nature, I should weaken or disgrace the cause. In the midst of these and other reflections my worthy companion rose, and, after a cordial shake of the hand, "Gale," said he, "I commit you to the mercy of the wide world; I hope they will use you well." The last observation was superfluous; for when did the *world* ever contribute to the happiness of man? But it was well meant, and I thanked him, almost with tears in my eyes. This is not a proper time or place for me to delineate a character of our present Secretary; but I hope, at some future period, to have an ample opportunity both to record *his* virtues and testify *my* regard. Thus much, however, I may at present be allowed to say, I *believe* he is a good citizen; I *know* him to be an honest man!

Previous to my departure, I received from the Executive Committee a copy of instructions for the regulation of my conduct, and a letter of introduction, both which I subjoin, for the information of the reader.*

* Vide Appendix.

At nine o'clock, A. M. in a convenient coach, with six tolerable horses, the Deputy of the London Corresponding Society sat out from the Blofoms Inn, Lawrence-lane. I was for some time alone; for one of the passengers, whom I afterwards found to be an opera dancer, was obliged to exert his agility in overtaking the coach, after it had made a considerable progress. He succeeded, and as it is usual with persons who are overheated with exercise, to charge the warmth of exertion to the temperature of the weather, he loudly complained it was very close, and obligingly letting down the windows, exposed me to a thorough air. This, together with the waiter of the inn having in the morning detained me for my boots till I had nearly lost my place, might have given me a slight presentiment of the crosses and persecutions I was hereafter to experience. However, I either forgot or disregarded the warning, and the coach being soon full of passengers, I had an opportunity to indulge my favorite propensity in contemplating their various persons and dispositions. What persons they were, or how many observations I made, I shall not at present declare, for though I hold secrecy to be, if not an absolute vice, at least a coward virtue, yet to inundate the public with unwished for and unnecessary communication, is surely impolitic and absurd.

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The conversation soon became political, and the company was nearly divided in opinion. The war was condemned by some of them, as draining the nation of its men and money, and commended by others *for the very same reasons*; it being contended by the latter that war was highly useful, to take off *superfluous mouths*, and a country at *peace and in prosperity always grew indolent and vicious!* Heavens! thought I, here's an admirable field for controversy; for sophistry and error may find, I perceive, sufficient advocates and supporters, even in a stage coach! We alighted at an inn at Dartford, the name, of which I do not remember, or if I did, would be of little consequence; it might be the King's Head, the Blue Boar, or the George Inn, or some such nonsensical sign; when, after having procured a little refreshment, and, by request of the coachman, toiled up a hill, to relieve the horses, we were overtaken by the coach, and, with the accession of another gentleman, whom, from the direction on a parcel which he carried in his hand, I discovered to be Lieut. Col. B. we again proceeded on our journey. A young man who had been a strenuous advocate for the war alighted at the corner of a road leading to Gravesend, after having informed us that he was just going on board a vessel for foreign service. He appeared a sensible young man. Perhaps it was
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fortunate for him that he entertained the sentiments he had professed ; yet I could not but sigh at the melancholy prospect he had before him, and reflect on the many dangers he was about to encounter. I am convinced I am a fool, and perhaps need not declare it ; but so it is ; I am always interesting myself about other people's affairs, regardless of my own, and exciting *contempt* and *hatred* where I expect to find commiseration and regard.

As we approached the *city* of Rochester, the coachman or the horses quickened their pace, and drove, or rather carried us with uncommon rapidity. The ladies were somewhat uneasy, and evinced symptoms of fear. I am not insensible of danger, but never having been overturned, and curiosity being an active principle in the human mind, I have sometimes ventured to express a desire of experiencing this and other novelties, for which the passengers have seldom thanked me.

About three o'clock, P. M. I arrived at Rochester, and alighting from the coach, with my bundle under my arm, took up my abode at the Bull Inn. As the first and most serious concern of an Englishman is generally to enquire what he can have to eat, I naturally took this wise and most
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necessary precaution. While dinner was preparing I was shewn into a handsome parlour, which looked into the street, where I amused myself with surveying the different objects which presented themselves. As no little incident or circumstance which in the smallest degree tends to develope the political sentiments of the persons or places where I visited can be justly considered as foreign to the purpose for which this Tour is written, I shall make no apology to my intelligent readers for sometimes troubling them with many little narratives of this description. Accidentally casting my eyes on the parlour mantle piece, I saw the following curious words, written in a fair and legible hand, " Britons, strike home, and save your liberties and your country : An enemy to all tyrants." And underneath, in a different hand, " An enemy to all scoundrels." Whether the two signatures were made by persons possessing similar or different principles, I know not ; but I believe that in all ages and in every country the word *tyrant* has been uniformly considered as synonymous with that of *scoundrel*.

It being a very rainy day, so soon as I had dined I dispatched a note and a letter of recommendation to the citizen to whom it was directed, when in about half an hour five of the inhabitants

inhabitants who were members of the Rochester society waited on me, with whom I entered into conversation, and from whom I learned that the Mayor was a good patriot, and had distinguished himself by a spirited opposition to the two late Convention Bills; that the Recorder, John Longley, Esq. had written a very sensible pamphlet in favour of parliamentary reform, and that the inhabitants in general were attached both to the Whig interest and to the London Corresponding Society. They informed me that the Society at Rochester consisted of nine or ten divisions; but since the late acts had been rather diminished and disorganized, from the timid apprehensions of some and the uncertainty of others of its members. They added, however, that their zeal in the cause of parliamentary reform was unabated, and that although the bills had somewhat lessened their activity, and diminished their strength, they wanted only some necessary advice and a few additional regulations to re-establish them in all their former security.

They added, also, an observation at which I could not forbear smiling, but which I afterwards found to be true, that they were little solicitous about the number of members who might attend, or apprehensive of the interference of a magistrate, for that Rochester was quite a lawless place! After receiving a
 confi-

considerable number of visitors, to the no small astonishment of the landlord and waiters, who, from my being an entire stranger, could not divine *who* I was, or *what* could possibly be the purport of such numerous and frequent attendance; I was introduced to a select party of friends, at the Falstaff Tavern, which had been purposely convened to receive me. I conversed with them for some time, and it was resolved that a meeting of the society should be called on Tuesday evening. I then left them, and returned to the inn, where having supped, I was about to retire to rest, when an incident took place which as it has since occupied a considerable portion of my attention, and may perhaps afford some little amusement to the reader, I will endeavour so far as memory will permit to particularize.

C. CHAP.

CHAPTER II.

ABOUT eleven o'clock two strangers, having enquired for me by name, entered the room where I was sitting, when one of them, after having for a moment surveyed me, apologized for his intrusion, at the same time declaring that I was not the person he wanted. I replied that my name was Jones, but he persisted in his opinion, and they both immediately quitted the room. As they went out they happened to meet the waiter, and I accidentally overheard them say that they wanted to see a person who was generally known by the name of Citizen Jones, and who was a member of the London Corresponding Society. After some words had passed between the waiter and them which I did not hear, they again entered the room, and without any ceremony came and seated themselves close by me, one of them at my left hand, and the other nearly opposite. I own the peculiarity of their manner somewhat surprized and disconcerted me, and I waited with no small anxiety for the result of this strange introduction. They were persons with whom I was entirely unacquainted, and I
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do not believe that I ever before had seen them. After a few moments pause, the person who sat opposite to me, fixing his eyes upon me with an inquisitive and somewhat of a menacing air, I broke silence. "Have you proved successful in your search, Sir?" "No, Sir."—"Are you acquainted with Citizen Jones, Sir?"—"I am intimately acquainted with *him*, and he knows *me*." I surveyed him in my turn, and for a few moments we were both silent. At length, addressing himself to me, "Pray, Sir, do you know one Citizen Young?" "I remember," replied I, "a person of that name, a member of a medical society to which I have the honour to belong." "No, Sir, it was not to the medical society, but to the London Corresponding Society he belonged; do you recollect such a person?"—His question was sudden, it was abrupt; I tried to remember, and calmly answered, "It is possible Sir, I may have known him, although I cannot at this particular moment recal him to my recollection." "*It is more than possible,*" he fiercely replied, "*and you will find so.*"—This last observation, delivered in so rude and peremptory a manner, again excited my particular attention, and after a few minutes consideration, I replied, "I think I do recollect a person of that name, and I believe he was a member of the Executive Committee at the time I belonged to it." "He was

" a clever man ; he used to correct Citizen Jones's
 " speeches for him." " Indeed ! this is the first
 " time I ever heard so."—" O yes ! Jones is no
 " scholar." " I believe not," answered I, smiling,
 " but from what I know of him, he seldom wrote
 " any of his speeches previous to delivery, and
 " what few he did were entirely his own ; but per-
 " haps you mean a different person."—" There is
 " but one Citizen Jones." " Pardon me," I replied,
 " I have the pleasure of being acquainted with *three*
 " (my brothers), and they are all members of the
 " London Corresponding Society."—" I mean *that*
 " Citizen Jones who belongs to the London Corres-
 " ponding Society, and who is connected with Thel-
 " wall."—" If by connection you mean a rigid ad-
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 " believe your observation true, but that ex-
 " cepted, and a frequent attendance on his political
 " lectures, I know of no particular intimacy exist-
 " ing between them."—" You are mistaken ; I po-
 " sitively assure you they are both connected toge-
 " ther." I smiled ; it was to no purpose for me to
 contend with one so absolute, unless I could first
 have convinced him of my personal identity. " And
 " pray, Sir," interrupted I, " where did you first
 " become acquainted with Citizen Jones ?" " At the
 " Guy's Head, in Warwick-Lane ; he invited me
 " to dine with him at his own house." " And where is
 " that ?"

“ that ? ” “ In St. Helen’s ; he is an apothecary . ”
 “ I have often been in St. Helen’s, Sir, and I think
 “ there is no apothecary of that name resides
 “ thereabouts . ” “ Oh yes there is, he keeps a
 “ shop there, but not in his own name . ”

I stared at his uncommon impudence, and at this strange perversion and mixture of truth and falsehood, and I began, for a moment, like the old woman in the song, to doubt whether or no I were really myself ! Although I had entertained strong suspicions that these persons knew me, and merely tried this mode of sifting me, in the hope of diverting me from my circumspection, and provoking me to anger, yet I conceived it possible that I might be mistaken, and that they might really have taken another person for me. My suspicions, however, were soon confirmed, and my doubts removed ; for changing the mode of attack, he began with launching out into the most scurrilous invectives against the London Corresponding Societies and myself, declaring we ought all of us to be hanged ; and observing to me, that Citizen Jones was sent down to Rochester for the purpose of stirring up sedition ; but he would find himself mistaken, for that the inhabitants of Rochester were good loyal subjects, and firmly attached to the king and constitution. He then concluded with asking me what we meant by
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universal suffrage, and annual parliaments? I felt my indignation rise, I therefore exerted my utmost to restrain my feelings, and contented myself with coolly replying, "That from his abrupt and extraordinary behaviour it was evident he came to insult me, but I did not think *that* the best or most likely mode to gain intelligence or acquire information; that the London Corresponding Society was well satisfied of the legality of its proceedings, and of the character and conduct of the person whom they had deputed, and that any other answer to inquisitive curiosity or impertinent intrusion, would be both ill timed and improper."

Finding he could not provoke me to rudeness or intemperance, and probably conceiving from my unpowdered head, and the suit of "sables" which I wore, that although of *some* religion, I was not of the *church* persuasion, he indulged himself in a torrent of abuse against the whole body of the Dissenters, observing that they crept into every place and situation under government only to find fault with it, that they were guilty of every enormity, and that if *he* had his will, he would soon make an end of them. "Thank God," exclaimed he, "I am a Churchman, and a Christian!" "I thought so," replied I, "from your *charity* and *moderation*."

"tion." Whether the last sarcastic observation produced any sensible effect I know not, but he eyed me with an earnestness bordering upon fury, and continuing to drink liberally from a bowl which was often replenished, it seemed as though he were drinking purposely to enable him the better to scold, or perhaps, if necessary, to fight me.

Turning round to the other person who sat close to my left elbow, and who had hitherto remained silent, I asked if he were an inhabitant of Rochester. The champion of the church and state immediately broke silence with a furious ejaculation, "*No, Sir, I am not an inhabitant of Rochester; I am come from London on a visit to my friend; but I scorn the base character of an informer!*" This sudden and extraordinary answer to a question which neither asked nor implied such an interpretation, at once satisfied and convinced me, and without wishing to be uncharitable or suspicious, will sufficiently serve, I think, to unriddle the whole enigma to every intelligent reader. Alone, in a retired part of the inn, and with two strangers, whose characters and views at least were equivocal, I did not conceive myself perfectly safe from malice or misinterpretation. I therefore rang the bell, and the servant entering with a candle, I rose to depart. One of them immediately approached, as if to detain me, requesting

requesting me to stay a little longer. I turned round to them with a look expressive of as much contempt as I could summon to my countenance, and calmly observed, that as I had experienced sufficient abuse for that night, I would take another opportunity to hear the remainder.

I then retired to bed, where I indulged myself in profound reflections on this new and curious adventure, and on the policy and propriety of employing a band of spies and informers.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

THE more I meditated on what had happened the preceding evening, the more was I perplexed to divine the real cause. The mode of attack which had been employed, and the questions which were asked, would at another time have appeared of trivial import, but at this particular juncture, when I recollected that I had been scarcely eight hours in the town, and had come not in an individual but in an official capacity; that Administration had been perpetually on the watch to harass and disturb the proceedings of the Friends of Reform, and had scrupled not to practise the most base and dishonourable means: that this being a *new*, must, therefore, be to them a very alarming project; and that they would leave nothing untried to render my mission abortive, I thought it a circumstance not undeserving of my serious attention. I remembered also, that it had happened, and might, therefore, happen again, that spies being employed, might be induced to become perjurers; and that if suddenly apprehended and charged with uttering any particular sentiments, I had not a single
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evidence to counteract their malice, or confirm my own innocence. And although I was well assured that the introductory letter which I was charged to deliver to the Societies of Rochester, &c. contained nothing improper or illegal, yet, being myself ignorant of its contents, I could not, under such a circumstance, plead guiltless, or be proof against a *successful forgery*.

I was occupied the next morning at breakfast with these and other reflections, when two citizens waited on me; and having briefly related to them the recent circumstance, and offered my opinion, we agreed that it would be proper for me to wait on Mr. Thompson, the Mayor, with the real purport of my visit, to guard against calumny and misrepresentation. It was determined also that the Delegates should be immediately summoned, to receive my letter, and examine my instructions. A worthy citizen then offered to accommodate me with convenient apartments at his house; with which proposal I the more readily complied, as I considered I could the more effectually accomplish the purpose for which I came, and be secure from the unwelcome intrusions of impertinent curiosity. Having appointed to meet him and another citizen at Chatham, I went to the Mayor's, but he was not at home. I then immediately proceeded to

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Chatham; when the landlord and another person introduced themselves as citizens, and the former observed to me, with a significant look, that there were many friends of liberty in the town, but they were rather timid in declaring themselves. He seemed to be a shrewd, sensible man, and to have made some useful observations. His parlour was well stored with political caricatures; by which I beg to be understood as not thereby meaning King, Lords, or Sir Jeffery Dunstan, although I believe there was a Royal Assault, and the Barber's Revenge upon Chancellor Pitt. Upon his mantle piece was written, in large and legible characters, "*National debt 75l. a minute, sleeping or waking.*"

Returning from the above mentioned place, an intelligent young man who accompanied me amused me with many curious remarks, and among other particulars, pointing to some Russian sailors, who were just passing, he observed to me that it was the opinion of many well-informed persons that sending the vessels of that nation to be repaired in our dock-yards was only a political manœuvre of the Empress to gain time and opportunity to inspect them, and to extract information. In this opinion they were the more confirmed by the conduct of the Russian officers, who appeared to be men of considerable penetration and

ment. Upon their first arrival in Chatham they had endeavoured by every possible method to ingratiate themselves with the inhabitants, and by their various observations, and the numerous enquiries they made of the workmen in the different branches of ship-building, had evinced a strong desire to become acquainted with every thing worthy of their notice. He related to me a circumstance which I could have hoped had not been true, but which I have since found to be well authenticated by the concurrent testimony of many of the inhabitants, and which excited a great degree of resentment. The victualling office had sent a considerable quantity of beef on board the Russian vessels, for the use of the sailors, but either from its not being sufficiently salted, or for some other trifling reason, they threw the whole into the river, whence it was picked up by the inhabitants in boats, and afterwards sold in the town ! This, with some other particulars which he related, such as the children pointing at them in ridicule, whenever they passed in the streets, and calling out to them *Roos, Roos !* and their troublesome behaviour in the various shops to which they had occasion to resort, afforded a strong apprehension that some serious disturbance would take place between the inhabitants and themselves before they quitted the town.

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I returned to take a survey of the apartments intended for my reception, which I found perfectly convenient. A fresh-coloured and pleasing young woman, the wife of the citizen at whose house I was to be accommodated, made her appearance, and said she hoped I should find every thing comfortable. "It was not very fine," she observed with a sigh, which I readily returned, "but you have a hearty welcome; and I have a good, wholesome bed, thank God!" "It's well you're allowed *that*," thought I: "it would perhaps be high treason to say you deserve more; though industry and good-nature like yours surely deserve to be better rewarded." I accepted the apartments with more heartfelt satisfaction than I could have experienced had it been in a palace. It was in a white house, of a Gothic appearance, which formerly belonged to a country gentleman, but after his death, had, to suit the convenience of its landlord, been separated, and now formed two distinct habitations. The situation to *me* was whimsical, and rather ominous; it was in *Love-lane*! The parlour intended for my study or amusement faced the large mansion of an old, superannuated widow lady, well known by the name of the widow Gordon.

In the evening a Committee of Delegates, consisting of seven citizens, waited on me, and read my letter of introduction and the instructions with which
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I was charged. Two of them went and summoned a meeting to be immediately held at Chatham. About eight o'clock I adjourned to the above place, when I was introduced to a numerous meeting of the Society. It would not be easy, nor would it perhaps be proper to convey an idea of the effect which this visit had upon the members. Their curiosity was visibly marked upon their countenances. *Upon my entrance they all rose with one accord, and the Deputy of the London Corresponding Society was ushered to the right hand of the President, amidst the unbounded plaudits of the whole assembly.* I mention this circumstance, not as it gives me any peculiar pleasure, or affords me any personal gratification; but because I am anxious that the Friends of Liberty here may know in what high estimation they are held in the country, and confirm, by their manly and dignified conduct, that partiality and esteem which they have hitherto so powerfully excited! Having delivered my letter and instructions to the Chairman, who read them to the assembly, I rose, and addressed the meeting in a speech of about an hour or more in length, wherein I explained the object of our views and principles, and pointed out some necessary regulations. I then retired to the apartments which I had engaged in the morning, and having taken a slight supper, retired to bed, harrassed and worn out with the fatigues of the day.

CHAP. IV.

BEING now in possession of a quiet and retired habitation, and having some little leisure time, I amused myself the next morning with examining the different objects which seemed most to solicit or deserve my attention : and although the immediate purport of this hasty Sketch is rather of a political nature, and I am not well adapted for descriptive accounts, yet I trust that an occasional remark, or a little attempt of that kind, will be considered neither improper nor unwelcome. Rochester, although called a city, is yet far from deserving that denomination, either from it's size or it's respectability. It forms but one continued street, which is neither paved nor lighted, and the inhabitants do not appear to abound in excessive opulence. Chatham, to which it immediately joins, and of which it seems but a part, is of the two the worst, being extremely dirty, and much occupied by soldiers. The houses, many of them wear a Gothic appearance, though a few are handsomely built in the modern stile. There is one particular

particular house in Rochester, which is still subject to an ancient and curious restriction. The landlord, I am informed, is obliged to afford a night's lodging and a groat in the morning to any traveller who may please to make the demand, and holds the house and his property only upon this extraordinary condition!

There is here a large Cathedral Church, and a Collegiate Chapel, where the service is performed every day much in the same manner as in St. Paul's in London. The minor canons reside in a handsome street near the church, which by many of the inhabitants is honoured with the whimsical appellation of the *black Barracks*. One of the principal objects which attracted my attention was the castle, which is on an eminence, commanding an extensive view of the river Medway, and the opposite shores of Kent. It is an old antiquated building, and its mouldering fragments and craggy points seem to threaten all who are rash enough to pass under its arches. The ravens have taken up their abodes in its solitary turrets, and by their incessant screams contribute not a little to its lonely appearance. I passed through this cheerless abode, meditating upon the progressive vicissitudes of human nature. To a contemplative disposition there is often a
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pleasing melancholy in visiting the monuments of the dead, and in tracing the venerable ruins of antiquity. The mind dwells with peculiar earnestness on past transactions, and recalls to her recollection the glorious deeds of ancient heroes, and the records of former ages. We remember, also, with a sigh, that posterity will in like manner be busily employed in explaining to the enquiring observer the vestiges and transactions of the present generation. Cities, towns, and villages will insensibly mingle with the dust, and a broken pillar or a sculptured architrave be all that remains to distinguish a once mighty and flourishing empire!

The morning was pleasant, and the distant sound of the drum gave notice that the military were about to perform their evolutions on the parade. Thither I went, and for a while was busily employed in observing their various manœuvres. As I attentively surveyed them I perceived, or fancied I perceived, a sullen discontent marked on each countenance, and a something like a desire of revenge manifested in the whole of their deportment. The frequent blows with the cane, and the austere ill humour which their general officer exercised upon them, could by no means tend to diminish the one or allay the other. It is surely a melancholy consideration, that men who expose themselves to so

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many difficulties and dangers abroad should be so hardly treated at home, and that to understand the duties of a soldier it should be necessary to endure the treatment of a slave! When the order to charge and present bayonets was given, I stood exactly opposite to them, and could not but confess within myself that they presented a most formidable appearance; yet I was solely employed in considering in what best manner such an exertion might be met with equal resistance and superior success. I think it would be highly useful were we more frequently to accustom ourselves to the sight of military men and martial manœuvres. It would tend to lessen, if not entirely to eradicate, that ridiculous terror which is generally exhibited by an unarmed multitude upon the first appearance of a military force, and confirm the disposition in a settled habit of courage and independence.

I visited the circulating library, which I found very convenient, as the London papers arrive there every day by three o'clock in the afternoon. Here such of the inhabitants as choose to subscribe assemble together in a little back parlour, to converse and read the news. The person who keeps the library is an intelligent and worthy young man. I forbear to mention his name, because he is a friend of reform; and it is somewhat strange, yet no less

true

true, that in these degenerate days to be a friend of reform is to subject oneself to persecution and unmerited abuse! In one of my visits to this place I chanced to meet with a person very loquacious and noisy, yet not destitute of sense, who was endeavouring to entertain the company with several particulars which I suppose he thought were entertaining: to me they were trivial and unimportant. I was looking over a catalogue, and did not suppose myself known. I observed, however, that when I spoke, which was merely to ask for some book, that there was a general silence. This remark, which here seems of no import, will hereafter be sufficiently explained: in the mean time, let it at present suffice to notice, that although I had hitherto studiously avoided giving offence, or obtruding my remarks upon any person, I have since found I did not after my departure escape either censure or animadversion.

In the evening of this day, being Tuesday, the 9th, I was introduced to a general meeting of the Friends of Parliamentary Reform, at the *Falstaff* Tavern, Mr. R——, a medical gentleman from Gillingham, being in the chair. It was very numerously attended; and one person venturing to ask if there were not more than the number allowed by the late acts, was angrily desired by

another to leave the room, and contribute by *his* absence to the diminution! No apprehension, however, being entertained respecting the legality of the assembly, I rose and addressed them for about an hour or somewhat more, wherein I endeavoured to give a concise history of the origin and progress of the London Corresponding Society, and recounted the various persecutions they had undergone. When I came to the account of Mrs. Hardy's death, and related the circumstances attending her funeral, the effect it had upon my auditory was visible. The landlady, who chanced to be in the room, wept aloud, and the whole assembly sat mute and motionless with pity and surprize. As I retraced the melancholy transaction, I own it excited in my mind the most exquisite emotions, and if I *spoke* as I *felt*, I do not wonder at the sympathy it raised in the generous bosoms of others. I quitted the society amidst numerous and unaffected demonstrations of civility and respect, and returned to my apartments with the pleasing hope and consolation that another day had been spent in improving myself and enlightening my fellow creatures.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

WHEN I went the next morning to the library, Mr. — requested to speak a few words with me; and taking me to a private parlour above stairs, addressed me nearly as follows—" You must be sensible, Mr. Jones, that your coming here is publicly known, and is become the general topic of conversation. Did you observe a person here last night who was very loud and talkative?" —I answered in the affirmative, adding, that I regretted the levity of his manner, as he seemed a sensible man.—" Do you know him?"—" No, Sir." —" He says you are acquainted with him, and that he knows you; but he supposes you will be shy in conversing in his presence."—I smiled at the supposition, and added, that I did not recollect ever having before seen him.—" It may be so," he replied, " but he is in the military service, and he says he saw you in St. George's Fields. He professes to know the object of your coming; and, as he is at present concerned in the management of the Rochester Post Office, has written, according
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" to his own account, to London (I supposed to
 the Secretary of State) " to know whether he may
 " be authorized *to open or intercept all letters to or*
 " *from you.* He last night gravely asked the Mayor,
 " at whose house we spent the evening, *whether he*
 " *would exert his utmost to suppress these seditious*
 " *Societies, and, if HE should find it necessary to*
 " *call out the military, assist him with the civil*
 " *power.* I am a stranger to you, Mr. Jones, and
 " although friendly to the cause of Parliamentary
 " Reform, my circumstances and situation will not
 " allow me openly to avow myself: I could not,
 " however, avoid giving you this information, that
 " you might be upon your guard."

I thanked him for his obliging civility, and observed, that there was nothing in the object of my visit which should render me desirous of concealment; that the London Corresponding Society did not conceive that deputing me to visit the Society at Rochester was either illegal or improper; and it could scarcely be expected that a Society which had in the pursuit of its object encountered so many difficulties and dangers, and for some years successfully resisted the whole united influence of a wicked Administration, would be deterred or intimidated by the insignificant efforts of a solitary individual. I added, that the silence which I had

hitherto

hitherto maintained, and which had been considered as so objectionable, did not arise from any desire of affecting a sullen or mysterious conduct, but from an unwillingness to obtrude my sentiments upon persons to whom I was an entire stranger, and that, on the contrary, I should be happy in an opportunity of making known my views and conduct to any one who might think proper to request an explanation.

I then rose to take my leave, after returning my acknowledgments for this friendly communication, and departed, musing on the new and curious adventures which were likely to befall me in my future peregrinations, and meditating on the strange and crooked policy which, under a pretence of supporting morality and law, can sanction breach of public confidence, and invasion of private property.

As I did not intend, when I began this hasty Sketch, to give a regular journal of every day's proceedings, and my memory will not permit me to recapitulate every minute transaction, I shall content myself with observing, that on the Wednesday evening I again met a division of the Society, when I proposed several regulations, and on Friday went to a general meeting, which was held

held at Brompton, a small village near the Chatham Barracks, which was numerously attended, especially by the millers and farmers of the adjacent parts, many of whom were members, and others well-wishers of the Society. At the conclusion of the business, many persons entered themselves members, and the whole assembly dispersed as usual with perfect regularity and decorum.

On the next evening, being Saturday, a party of citizens invited me to sup with them at the Falstaff Tavern: I readily complied, and spent a most agreeable evening, in the utmost conviviality and friendship. I here met with a most intelligent person, a farmer, from Gillingham, who entertained me as well by his agreeable raillery as by his judicious observations. He was possessed of a considerable property, which I understand he acquired by his own industry. He was a strong Democrat, and, I doubt, something *more* than a Reformer. This, however, may have arisen from an unhappy idea which at this time is prevalent in the minds of many, *that the evil is at its height, and that it is now too late for Reform.* I think not: it can never surely be too late to interpose between vice and virtue, and promote the general happiness of mankind. It is true, I may be mistaken; but until I can be better convinced, I must claim the

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privilege of persisting in my own opinion. After some humorous songs, partly of a convivial, but chiefly of a political nature, the assembly broke up in the utmost harmony, and before twelve o'clock, every one, I believe, had quietly retired to his peaceful habitation.

Although I do not *profess* to be a Christian, I have ever been fond of attending churches, and visiting church-yards. Accordingly the next day, being Sunday, I rose early, and took a walk to the parish church, where having amused myself with reading the inscriptions on those mortuary registers the tomb-stones, I afterwards inspected the outside of the cathedral church. The reader, according to his particular opinion or persuasion, may be inclined to smile or frown at my saying the *outside*, but I should explain by observing, that this was before the door of the church was opened, and that I was religiously employed in examining it's architecture, which was truly Gothic, and tolerably well calculated for duration. When it was time, I entered the church, which bore a striking resemblance to the inside of Westminster Abbey, the roof being very lofty, and fretted with irregular excavations. At the farther end is the place where divine service is performed, which, when I entered, I was agreeably struck with the pleasing appearance

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that the soldiers made, who were all ranged at the farther distance of the aisle, and who seemed to pay particular attention to the minister. I stood for a while, uncertain whether I might be allowed to step into one of the vacant places, till fatigued with continuing in one posture, I advanced and seated myself in a pew in one corner of the chapel. I soon perceived I had committed an enormous offence, from the significant looks and gestures of some part of the congregation. It is certainly very strange and inconsistent, that the Christian Religion, which was founded on perfect equality, and teaches an actual community, should countenance exclusive privileges and particular situations! The Dissenters, although aware of the many improprieties of the church establishment, practise the same absurdity, and the green pews and galleries at a Methodist meeting are reserved for the brethren elect with as much ceremonious formality as the boxes of a theatre, or the crimson seats at a Chapel Royal!

The loftiness of the place, and the low tone of the right reverend preacher, prevented me from hearing scarce any of his sermon, and the only things, therefore, which seemed to deserve my attention were the organ and the band of choristers, who chaunted the service in a very pleasing manner.

manner. They were all young lads, and it is curious to observe the effect which custom has upon the human mind, for during the time they were reciting the most serious compositions they were so little aware of their importance as to be continually nodding or smiling at each other. But children are not the only persons who utter and practise things by mere rote. Persons of riper years can frequently give no better reason for what they do than that they were taught so!

In the afternoon I was agreeably surprized with a visit from a worthy Citizen, a member of the London Corresponding Society, who, having been to a friend at Gravesend, had walked over to Rochester purposely to see me. I learned from him, that the delegate which had been sent to Portsmouth had already experienced the *good* natured effects of ministerial vigilance, and that a defamatory paragraph, announcing his presence, and giving a description of his person, had been inserted in the paper of that place, *previous even to his arrival!* It had not, however, the effect which was intended, for the inhabitants of the town were only the more solicitous to see and hear him! In consequence, however, of the Society's not having obtained any intelligence from him since his first letter to them, they became somewhat uneasy, and had, therefore,

deputed the Secretary of the Society to visit him. He informed me, also, of some useful regulations which the Society had adopted; that, in addition to the General Committee, they had appointed a District Committee, and for the convenience of those who resided at a distance, had divided London into ten departments, in each of which any person desirous of being a member, and living in the vicinity, must confine himself. The citizens of Gravesend, he said, felt somewhat displeased and disappointed that I had not called upon them in my way to Rochester, and hoped that on my return they should not be forgotten. He took leave of me in the evening, with a letter for the Society, which I entrusted to his care, promising to send some books and regulations, of which the Rochester Society stood much in need.

At night I again accompanied the Secretary of the Rochester Society to the Falstaff, where we found a considerable number of Citizens. The evening was spent in agreeable and not altogether uninteresting conversation. I am convinced that the principle of association is good. It certainly tends to dispose men to habits of friendship and benevolence, and while by its extensive chain of connection it expands their faculties, and enlarges their comprehensions, it affords to generous emulation

emulation an ample opportunity to display the proud pre-eminence of talent and of virtue. It is perhaps not unworthy of remark, that at the public meetings of the London Corresponding Society several persons were present who had travelled from Rochester, Chatham, Gravesend, and other parts of Kent, so predominant is the principle of curiosity, more especially when urged by a laudable motive, and stimulated by the animating idea of liberty and independence!

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

SO rapidly did the principles of reform diffuse themselves in the breasts of the surrounding country, and so little did the late Convention Bills damp the ardour of the inhabitants of Kent, that new divisions quickly sprang up, and on the following Monday I was requested to accompany some citizens to Gillingham, a small village about two miles distant from Chatham, to assist in forming one under the auspices of the medical gentleman who resided there, and of whom I have already spoken. I gladly consented to the proposal, and about seven o'clock in the evening set out, accompanied by the secretary and another citizen. We stopt a while to rest ourselves at Brompton, where a society was just going to meet, and after some little conversation, and with an accession of company, we again proceeded on our journey. It was a beautiful night. The moon shone with uncommon splendor: while the calm silence that reigned around us, and the mildness of the atmosphere, together with the cheerful and rational conversation of

of the citizens who accompanied me, afforded me a peculiar pleasure. They expatiated on the numerous barracks and fortifications which everywhere surrounded us, lamented their enormous expences, and ridiculed the idea of their being useful either to prevent an invasion from without, or quell a *general* insurrection within. I listened to their conversation with the more earnest attention, as I am almost ashamed to confess, that I had hitherto entertained, in spite of myself, that absurd, but, I believe, common prejudice, that at such a distance from the metropolis, and from men of a particular description, we could scarcely hope to find a considerable degree of penetration and discernment. I have, however, been mistaken, and I am happy in an opportunity of publicly avowing it. Men of liberal minds and comprehensive understandings are limited to no spot—are the exclusive growth of no particular soil or climate. Wherever nature or opportunity have furnished the means of improvement, the ability has seldom or never been wanting.

As we approached Gillingham I grew fatigued, and just as we had reached the village was so much exhausted that I was obliged to sit down on a stone step to prevent me from fainting. The tender solicitude which was shewn by the worthy citizens,
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the celerity with which one of them flew to get some wine for my relief, and the friendly respect and civility with which all of them treated me, raised within me the most exquisite sensations. A crowd of ideas rushed at once upon my mind, and almost overpowered me. I was a stranger to them but from report, yet they reposed implicit confidence in me: I had shewn *them* no singular acts of kindness, and yet they treated *me* with the most unbounded humanity and benevolence!—Would to God that those who tyrannize and oppress the labouring part of mankind would sometimes turn aside from their ambitious schemes and ill-concerted projects, and descend to a friendly and familiar intercourse. They would then perceive how grossly they have been deceived. They would discover that virtue and honesty shine with additional splendor from beneath the rude garb of the cottager, and within the humble roof of the industrious peasant. Oh Pride, thou subtle forceress and destroyer of mankind! what impenetrable barriers hast thou interposed! what mischievous distinctions hast thou made between the real interests and happiness of man! The modest virtues are disregarded and despised—Wealth and titles alone are the objects of universal admiration, and one half of the world is set in proud and gorgeous array against the peace and independence of the other!

I had just recovered some little strength, and we were proceeding on our journey, when we were met by our medical friend, and some of the inhabitants of the village, who had come out to meet us. He intreated me to lean on his shoulder, with which request I readily complied, and in a few moments we arrived at the place of meeting. I found in a convenient room, about twenty persons, of a plain, but honest appearance, many of them farmers, and a few millers. The business of the evening was very short, and was concluded by reading a speech upon the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform. About eleven o'clock I was conducted to a neat little chamber, at an inn, where I slept, and the next morning I breakfasted with my medical friend. I found him an intelligent man, and I need not, therefore, add a Democrat; for good sense and democracy are now generally considered as synonymous terms. His house was very small, the rent, I believe, amounting to no more than six-guineas a year! His shop consisted of a little room, the window of which was stocked with a few medicines and bottles, and which served "for parlour, "for kitchen, and every thing else." As the neighbourhood, beside being small, was so poor, as not to be able to afford being often ill, he had not much employment, and therefore spent much of his time in shooting, in which he was tolerably

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skilful,

skilful, and with the produce of which, I suppose, he frequently procured a meal! He was married, and seemed tolerably contented, except that he contended for the absolute necessity of a Reform in Parliament, and sometimes pointed to his gun, which was placed over the mantle piece! I was much pleased with him, and, a few obstacles removed, I should be happy in his acquaintance; but unfortunately, he kept two or three large *dogs*, and was himself rather *dogmatical* in his opinions. The humorous farmer whom I have already mentioned, called on him, as he was often accustomed to do, being his fellow companion and sportsman, and upon my expressing a desire to visit the Ville-de-Paris and the French prison ships, which were lying in the river at a small distance, the latter offered to accompany me on board, being acquainted, he said, with the officer, who was an excellent Democrat, but who, from the nature of his situation, was prevented from avowing his principles. This last observation has been frequently made, and ought as frequently to be refuted. I know of no rank or situation that can be justly considered as either honourable or useful which deters a man from declaring his free sentiments, or prevents him from uttering what he conceives to be the truth!

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Having taken leave, perhaps for the last time, of my medical acquaintance, I sat off, accompanied by this honest farmer, whom, from the frequent salutations he received from the persons we met, I suppose to be well known, and much respected. He was a man of considerable property, which he took care to tell me, thinking, I imagine, that it would raise him in my estimation. He was mistaken; it was the only thing I disliked in him. As we went along, he assured me that this part of the country was very healthful, and the inhabitants themselves remarkable for their longevity. I would willingly have believed him, had I not remarked that they drank considerable quantities of spirits and other strong liquors, and that the county of Kent was proverbial for its agues, and intermittent fevers.

We took a boat, and were soon by the side of the *Ville-de-Paris*, a new and magnificent vessel, carrying 110 guns. Its lofty appearance, and the beauty of the workmanship with which it was decorated, excited the most agreeable sensations. They were soon, however, exchanged for others of a less pleasing nature, when I recollected the particular purpose for which it was built, and the object of its future destination. Strange that the ingenuity of man should be so perverted and mis-

applied, and that the wonderful powers of human invention should be employed only to overwhelm and to destroy ! We were asked upon our entrance if we were Englishmen. It is a common, but I think an absurd and unnecessary question. Having answered, however, in the affirmative, we were conducted through the various parts of the vessel, and received suitable answers to our numerous enquiries. The guide who accompanied us was an old seaman, and had lost his arm, as *he* said, in the *king's* service. " We were just returning, Sir," said he, " after having relieved Gibraltar, in the last war, " and were followed by the French and Spanish " fleets, when looking out at one of the port holes, " a shot came and took my arm clean off." " Its " curious," added he, turning to my companion, who was himself, also, at that time in the fleet, " that it never took me off my *bowls*," by which expression, I suppose he meant his *legs*. " How- " ever, though I lost my arm, thank God I did " my duty !" " Thou art a brave fellow," thought I ; " nevertheless I heartily wish thou hadst thine " arm again." Pointing to the dreadful balls which lay in the middle of each deck, in excavations or moulds, for the convenience of the seamen in the time of action, " There," said he, with the utmost sang froid, " are the sugar plumbs we give " our enemies," " Very palatable, truly," I exclaimed,

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ed, "but surely somewhat hard of digestion." As I traversed the decks, the idea of an engagement offered itself to my imagination, and scarcely conceiving, amidst the loud din and horrid uproar, which must be present on such an occasion, the possibility of performing any act of humanity, I requested to see the cockpit. I was immediately conducted below, to a small square place, which seemed to me much too dark for the purpose for which it was designed. Here, I was informed, behind a platform covered with linen, the surgeon and the clergyman take their stand; the one to receive the poor wounded sailors, and perform the necessary operations, and the other to relieve their fatigue, by constantly supplying them with grog! A curious employment for a minister of the gospel, and for a preacher of peace, quite suitable and convenient! "Surely," said I, "during the heat and tumult of an action, many things must be either neglected or forgotten. At the hospital where I attended, I remember a single amputation was the labour of some time, and even the tying up of the arteries occupied many minutes." I looked at the old seaman for an answer; he shook his head, and was silent. "My fears," thought I, "are just, and many a valuable life is lost for want of a timely application. Oh! God! what a world is this, and how terrible are
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“ the errors and follies of men ! Why is it that
 “ they consign each other, without pity or remorse,
 “ to be thus mangled and destroyed ? When I
 “ venture to remonstrate, I am told that I refine too
 “ much, and am not fit for this world. Alas ! if such
 “ be the necessary institutions of this waking dream
 “ of existence, why can I not instantly release myself
 “ from such a dreary vision, and burst the horrid
 “ enchantment ? ”

Having rewarded our guide for his trouble, we
 left the Ville de Paris, not without one of us inti-
 mating that we thought it would make a fine
national ship. This last sentiment, however, is
 somewhat equivocal, and perhaps dangerous. The
 good old words, Citizen, or Nation, are now
 changed for new constructive appellations, and to
 express a sincere and ardent love for our *country*,
 is to incur the serious charge of exciting contempt
 and hatred against the King and Constitution ! As
 we approached the ship in which the French prisoners
 were confined, I felt my curiosity strongly excited.
 My imagination immediately presented the idea of
 a number of bold and intrepid men, whose coun-
 tenances bespoke independence, and whose hearts
 were full of gaiety. I expected at least to have
 seen them dancing the Carmagnole, or to hear them
 chaunt, in loud and vigorous strains, the patriotic
 tune

tune of *Ca Ira*. But I had forgotten that long continued slavery debases the mind, and enfeebles the body, and that a man without hope is almost always destitute of exertion.

The officer received us with polite attention. I panted with eagerness to be introduced to the prisoners, but endeavoured to restrain my anxious solicitude, for fear of a disappointment. At length, having asked me whether I should like to see them, and I having answered in the affirmative, he took me to the farther part of the vessel, through a kind of partition, which separated them from the rest of the crew, where I saw a groupe of miserable objects, whose countenances bore the strong features of disappointment and despair! Alas! thought I, are these French Citizens? are these Republicans? I went among them, however, anxious to converse with them, and desirous of introducing myself to their notice. I addressed myself to them, and asked if they would dance the *Carmagnole*. I believe I asked an imprudent question, at least it was ill-timed; for musing at each other with a look bordering somewhat upon contempt and indignation, one of them, with an expressive shrug, replied, "*Monseigneur, la musique est en France.*"—I felt abashed and disconcerted. It was plain they mistook my friendly effort of introduction for the
sneer

sneer of triumphant arrogance, and perhaps thought I imitated the conduct of the proud enemies who tauntingly asked the children of Israel to sing again some of their ancient strains, when their harps were unstrung and suspended among the willows! Eager to undeceive them, I exclaimed, "Je suis Anglois, mais je suis Citoyen. J' aime "votre Patrie, & je souhaite qu' elle seroit libre." They gathered round me, and with anxious looks seemed to question the sincerity of my declaration. I began a conversation, and gave them a concise account of the various events which had taken place in France. I described the fall of Robespierre, the establishment of the Directory, and the acceptance of the new Constitution. I told them that the war was a war of the Administration, and not of the People of England. That they alike detested the Minister and his measures, and that the People of France would one day receive a convincing proof of it. That in the mean time there were not wanting many who loved and respected the bravery exhibited by the French Republic, but, from the situation of affairs, and the pressure of present circumstances, felt it improper and impolitic publicly to avow it. They were delighted at my relation. I saw their countenances brighten, and their eyes beam with joy. *Vive la Republique* was the universal cry, and even the English centinel,

tinel, who marched backwards and forwards with attentive observation, seemed, as he passed us, to smack his firelock with increased energy, and share in the general satisfaction ! If I die for it, I must confess I partook of their pleasure ; for I do wish for peace, and I do respect the gallant French Republic ; and yet I know not that the avowal of sentiments like these proclaims me either a coward or a traitor, or renders me less willing in a just or honourable cause to lose my life in the defence of my country !

I asked them if they had sufficient provisions : they shook their heads, and answered no. The Minister would do well to enquire into this, and, if true, rectify the abuse. It is not the interest, and it ought not to be either the policy or the practice of civilized and enlightened nations to starve those whom the fortune of war has delivered into their hands ! Numerous complaints have been made, and readily believed, that the French keep their prisoners upon short allowance. I should hope that *our* superior greatness would be shewn by our superior humanity and moderation. I know that the provision of this vessel was contracted for by Government ; but I know also, that it was at so low a price that it was generally supposed that the contractor would indemnify him-

self by a scanty distribution. I saw, before I quitted the vessel, an evident proof of the truth of this assertion, and the justice of their complaints. It was nearly three o'clock in the afternoon before they could get any dinner, and when procured it consisted only of a little soup of bouilli, which the officer, in other respects a humane and sensible man, told them *was sufficient for that day!* How power narrows the heart, and a constant attendance upon misery weakens and diminishes it's effects, even upon the most benevolent dispositions!

When our conversation was at an end, I drew out a small piece of money, and gave it to the most forward of them, requesting him to share it equally among his companions, and to drink to the health and prosperity of the citizens of all the world! They raised their hands to their caps, and would have bowed, but I prevented them, observing, that *a Freeman should never bow to a Slave!* I took my leave of them, after expressing a hope, that if they should hereafter be released, and I should visit their country, they would remember me, and afford me in return a welcome reception. I then rejoined the officer and my companion, who had walked aside during this conversation. He observed to me, that long confinement had produced a remarkable change in the countenance and conduct

duct of the prisoners entrusted to his care. That when they were first taken they were robust and hearty, with fine florid countenances and lively spirits, and breathed nothing but animation and independence. They had lately experienced a severe disappointment, as the cartel for the exchange of prisoners had lately been countermanded by order of Administration. As I passed through the lower deck, I saw a fine looking young man, and going up to him, "Etes vus François?" asked I.—He shrewdly answered, "Je suis Citoyen." They make a distinction, I perceive, between *Frenchman* and *French Citizen*, the former appellation not being sufficiently explicit, I suppose, to prevent them from being mistaken for Emigrants. Judging, perhaps, from my being a stranger, that I might have come upon particular business, he asked with an anxious countenance when he should be changed. I answered, I was at present uncertain, but I hoped it would be soon. I asked him how long he had been confined, and I think he informed me about twenty months. 'Tis a dreadful period to be kept in slavery and inactivity; for in these situations there seems to be but little communication or means of improvement. With the utmost frankness and simplicity he approached me, and said, as one friend might familiarly to another—
 "Monsieur, donnez moi un chelin, s' il vous

“plait?” I was struck with his manner, and smiling, replied, “My good friend, what can you want with a shilling? Beside, I am poor myself.” He shook his head—“Ah, si j’avois autant que vous!”—“Thou wouldst then have little else to bestow than pity to the unfortunate.” I did not, however, suffer his request to pass unnoticed, because, whatever were *my* wants, *his* must unquestionably have been greater; I could not, therefore, without being guilty of injustice, withhold *from* him what was *his of right*!

The officer, whose dinner was just ready, now asked us to partake with him in what he called a homely meal, but which should be accompanied with what in my opinion is more pleasant than the most exquisite dainties, a hearty welcome. We entered his little cabin, and sat down to share with him in his repast. He was a young man of polite address and agreeable manners. He was lately married, and resided at Gillingham, but spent most of his time on board. I perceived he was thoughtful, and after dinner took occasion to turn the conversation to the nature and disposition of seamen and the sea service, and asked him whether it suited his inclination. With a heavy sigh he answered in the negative, adding, that in his opinion *the King’s service was the most abject slavery!* I
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at first expressed my surprize at his continuance in what he seemed so strongly to dislike; but this surprize soon lessened, when I recollected that few young men at their first entrance into life are suffered to choose their own employments, or if they do, it is experience alone which can enable them to discover its unsuitableness to their temper or inclination. When perceived, it is often too late to profit by the discovery, and the loss of time and the dread of want urge men rather to continue in their old habits and pursuits than to undertake fresh projects or hazard new experiments. He would not allow that seamen in time of battle were ever stimulated to action by any other motives than a sense of danger or a *fear* of punishment. The idea of patriotism and courage he treated as ridiculous, their love of liberty as visionary, and attachment to their country as a farce! Mere mechanical exertions, he said, were all that were either expected or bestowed by the officers or the seamen, and if the former gave orders, and the latter stood to their guns, it mattered little to either who was the enemy, or what the justice or the injustice of the cause! We hear," cried he, "of a glorious action, or a successful exploit, but even granting its splendor or its honour, we forget that this is not the occurrence of every day: the intervals that elapse are long and tedious, and the life

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“ of a seaman, like that of a prisoner in confinement, is but an unvaried succession of the same dull and barren incidents!” I could not but assent to much of what he asserted, though I still hoped that in what related to military or naval skill he was somewhat prejudiced and mistaken. Patriotism and enthusiasm are not surely visionary or ideal qualities, and an English soldier or sailor certainly sometimes oppose an enemy from the laudable though mistaken idea that they are serving their King and Country!

He professed himself friendly to reform, but feared it was too late. He disliked and disapproved of the war, and as a proof, although educated from childhood in the service, he contented himself with the humble but not dishonourable employment which he then possessed, of taking care of the French prisoners. I took leave of him, regretting that my visit was so short, and my prospect of ever seeing him again so uncertain. He accompanied me to the side of the vessel, and after assuring me that he should be happy in my company if I chanced to come that way again, my companion and I descended into the boat which waited for us, and were soon on the opposite shore. I wish I dared mention the name of this intelligent officer; but such is the unhappy temper of the times,

times, and such the vindictive disposition of persons professing opposite opinions, that even this little tribute of esteem must be denied, and I therefore prudently forbore at the Chatham Assembly, where I afterwards saw him, to converse with him, or profess even the most trifling acquaintance, lest it should subject him to inconvenience or persecution.

(55)
CHAP. VII.

IN the evening I again attended another division of the Rochester Society at Chatham, when several regulations were proposed, and many resolutions adopted. The temper and disposition of the members in Rochester are more equal than those of our London Societies. No heat, no animosity, no ambition of particular distinctions; all here seems to be perfect equality and good order, and the business of each night is always concluded with the utmost harmony and tranquility. I had hitherto visited only men who were actually enrolled as members of a Corresponding Society, or accidentally met with persons of liberal sentiments and friends of reform at a circulating library. As I wished for nothing more than to obtain an accurate and impartial statement of the opinion of the people in general, and to collect their real sentiments, it was now necessary that I should gain access to what are usually termed the higher and more polished classes of civilized society. Accordingly, I went on the next evening to the Chatham

tham Assembly, excited, I readily acknowledge, as well by a fondness for dancing as from a motive of political curiosity. I expected to find a considerable portion of aristocracy and proud formality, but I was agreeably deceived; for, except from the tune of God save the King being played by the band of musicians, as a vehicle for putting their instruments in unison, before any person entered the Assembly, and from the appearance of the redoubtable Inspector General of the Post and Post Captain Mr. A—, who came late into the room, every thing bore the aspect of politeness, affability, and good sense! Several gentlemen, with whom I was unacquainted, did me the favour to interchange sentiments with me, from whom I learned, that the general sentiment of the inhabitants of Rochester, Chatham, and even of all Kent, was decidedly against the present Minister and the present war. The strenuous opposition shewn by the Whig Club to the two late extraordinary Bills introduced into Parliament by Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, seems to have raised that association very high in their estimation, and they asked, with some appearance of eagerness, whether any more public meetings were soon to take place? Chatham being a military town, I was surprized at not observing any officers present, when a gentleman informed me, that in consequence of a disturbance

having taken place, the inhabitants had come to a resolution of admitting no military officers to their assemblies. Those of the Navy were admitted, but not in their uniforms, nor without first being introduced by a friend, who would vouch for their good behaviour. This determination shews the spirit and good sense of the inhabitants of Rochester, and it would be well perhaps if this conduct were imitated at other times, and in other places; we should not then at our public places of amusement be pestered with so many military coxcombs, nor dragooned into a servile and unmanly compliance with absurdity and nonsense, at the hazard of being subjected to martial discipline!

While I was busily engaged in the amusement of the festive scene, I was informed that some persons wished to speak with me. I went, and found the secretary of the Rochester Society, attended by some strangers, who came to inform me that a deputation had just arrived from the Citizens at Luton, who wished for my company on the next evening, and would spare no expence or accommodation if I would comply with their request. I desired him to convey my grateful acknowledgments for this obliging mark of civility, but having strong doubts of the propriety of making promises, begged them not to expect me. When I returned

to the room, I could perceive that this little incident, trifling as it may appear, had excited the attention of the assembly. Their looks and gestures evinced their suspicion that something extraordinary must have happened. Secrecy and mystery are two very powerful incentives to human curiosity. They flatter the consequence, and soothe the vanity of man; while undisguised sincerity, and unreserved communication, are almost always undervalued or despised. Being a stranger to most of the company, I left them to divine the cause of my temporary absence, and imagine, if they pleased, some wonderful conspiracy, and continued to enjoy the pleasures of "the light, fantastic toe," till near the usual hour of departure, when, quite exhausted with fatigue and indisposition, I got into a chaise which waited for me, and, having arrived at my place of abode, retired to rest, not without many pleasing reflections on the entertainment I had this evening experienced.

Meanwhile the time of my departure drew nigh. I had received a letter from the Executive Committee of the London Corresponding Society, desiring me to be in town on Monday the 22d instant, and I was to call at Gravesend on my return. On Friday evening I attended a very numerous meeting of the united Societies of Rochester, Chatham,

Brompton, &c. when I took my farewell leave, with an earnest exhortation to them to continue their strenuous efforts, and not to desert till they had accomplished their virtuous purpose. They listened with silent attention,—they answered with loud acclamations. One heart, one mind, one sentiment, seemed, like an electric shock, to pervade at once the whole assembly. They crowded around me to testify their honest zeal, and I retired with a heart almost overwhelmed with contending emotions. Several new members were that night enrolled in their list, and they expressed a firm reliance that their numbers would henceforth increase tenfold. Dear scenes of peace and happiness, how often do I recal you to my anxious memory—how often retrace the pleasing task I undertook, and the ample harvest I experienced! No guilty purpose, no sordid view, no ambitious or interested project can ever afford so sweet a solace to the active mind, or yield on retrospection so fixed and permanent a pleasure, as the recollection of an honest endeavour to produce peaceful reformation, and promote the public good! Why should not man, intelligent man, be suffered to expand his noble faculties, and tread the vast creation free and unconfined? Why should not those ample blessings which bounteous nature has scattered in wild luxuriance over the surface of the

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the habitable globe be alike the equal lot of all? Alas! the earth, once an indulgent parent, has been since converted into a severe and cruel step-mother, and her freeborn children exchanged and removed, to make room for bondmen and slaves!

On Saturday afternoon, having taken leave of the secretary, his wife, and little child, with a heavy heart I departed in the Rochester coach for Gravesend. The afternoon was pleasant, but my mind was too ill at ease to contemplate the beauties of nature. A crowd of mournful ideas presented themselves to my imagination. I had remained long enough at Rochester to become interested in the welfare of it's inhabitants, and many of them had kindly noticed and endured me. I was leaving them, and might, perhaps, never see them again. I am yet so much of a child as to dread and dislike parting scenes. The mind accustomed to dwell with satisfaction on particular objects is with difficulty recalled from their contemplation, and busy remembrance often paints with too high a colouring the gay and pleasurable scenes of former enjoyments!

Among the company in the coach was an old gentleman, whom, from his conversation, I found
to

to be very wealthy, and a member of Parliament. The question of the Slave Trade had just been lost in the House of Commons. I am not fond of preserving a long continued silence, even in the presence of strangers: I ventured, therefore, to introduce the subject, and to lament the late unfortunate decision of the Legislature. I was soon answered by the usual and yet extraordinary observation, that the slaves wanted not their freedom, and that they were happier in their situation, and far more comfortable than the poor in our own country! I hope, for the honour of humanity, and of our country, this is not true. It would be strange indeed if the comforts and conveniencies of the British peasant were less than those of the African slave! That their abject situation had so far debased and degraded them as to render them insensible to the blessings of liberty was impossible, or, if possible, afforded, I conceived, no justification for the wanton oppression of those whose superior refinement and civilization ought at least to teach them superior moderation and forbearance! But it was the *interest* of the planter to treat his slaves with tenderness and humanity! A carman who lashes his horses with unfeeling severity in the streets of London, may use the same plea, with much about the same success. Whether they be used well or ill, is, however, immaterial; the question

question is, hath any man a *right* to impose slavery on another? It was in vain to advance these arguments, or contend against the impolicy or injustice of this trade. Personality, as usual, soon followed, and I therefore dropt the conversation. There are some minds, I fear, so narrowed by wealth and enervated with luxury, that nothing but the approach of some terrible calamity will alarm them into reflection, or compel them to use their sober senses! At another time, and in a different place, I may perhaps be induced to treat this subject more at large; for the present, I hope it is not High Treason to observe, that the Slave Trade is a disgrace to *any* nation that sanctions it, and I believe it is no part either of his Majesty's dignity or dominion to traffic in human blood! "All this, however," said the *intelligent* senator, "is *entirely out of date*. The subject which now wholly engrosses the attention of the town, and is the subject of general conversation, is the project of building wet docks. I have myself subscribed largely to the scheme: yet in the House," added he, with a significant look, "to preserve appearances, I have done what many others do, voted contrary to my own inclination!"

The coach put me down at the end of a road, about half a mile distant from Gravesend. I
amused

amused myself, while walking, with contemplating the novelty of the scene. The view of the Thames and the surrounding prospects are charming, but the town of Gravesend has a mean and disagreeable appearance. I arrived at the house of a worthy citizen, to whom I had been recommended, and who received me with the most friendly civility. He pressed me to make his habitation my home, during my short stay, and I accepted his obliging offer. From him I learnt, that there were many citizens in Gravesend, but that they were in great want of advice and regulations. He informed me that he had incurred the displeasure of the Mayor, who was a furious aristocrat, for posting up at his door a spirited notice for the inhabitants to meet at the town-hall, to petition against the Convention Bills; and a person who called that afternoon assured me that the Mayor had refused to pay him a just debt of about thirty pounds, merely because he had been so audacious as to sign his name to the petition! This is not the first and only Mayor who has played both fool and knave: I shall hereafter have occasion to mention a few of the curious extravaganzas of these sage *political almanacks*.

In the evening my worthy friend introduced me to an assembly consisting of nearly fifty persons, whom I addressed for about an hour, explaining
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to them the principles of universal suffrage, and pointing out to them the necessity of an immediate reform. I had the satisfaction, at my conclusion, of finding that sixteen new members were made; and I took my leave of them, not without expressing my regret at my being unable to make a longer stay. My friend, I perceived, officiated as secretary. He was very active, and seemed much delighted at this new accession of strength. We retired to his house to supper, where a social and agreeable entertainment with his family and friends concluded the business of the day.

CHAP. VIII.

THE next morning, being Sunday, I visited the church (I mean the *inside*, though the outside is well worthy of half an hour's attention). It is well built, and handsomely ornamented. The sermon, as usual in church establishments, was very dull and insipid, but I was amply recompensed by the excellent manner in which my friend chaunted the psalms. He has a good manly voice, and sings with more taste and judgment than I should have expected in a country town. The sermon ended, we returned to what pleased me better, an excellent dinner; the only fault of which was, that it consisted of too many dishes, and was attended by too little company. Complaisance, I perceive, still gets the better of judgment, and a desire to be reckoned hospitable urges the most sensible persons into unnecessary profusion. I hope, in time, to see our *tables*, as well as our Senate House, reformed, and private œconomy keep equal pace with public virtue!

Having

Having been accustomed from childhood to be sent *twice* a day to church; if it were only for the purpose of sleeping, or keeping out of mischief, I went again in the afternoon, accompanied by two female citizens, the sisters of my friend, and himself. In the midst of the service, some trifling noise being made by some children behind the last pew, the beadle, that pettyvillage tyrant, advancing with the dreadful cane in his hand, with which he usually keeps the parish in due obedience, and mistaking the seat of the disorder, opened a pew door, where two fine boys of a genteel appearance were sitting, and began to exercise his magisterial authority, by endeavouring to turn one of them out. Unwilling, however, to be publicly disgraced, and perhaps conscious of his innocence, the boy made a stout resistance. My attention was forcibly attracted. I hate tyranny, in whatever shape it appear, or in whatever form it may be exercised; my heart was, therefore, with the boy, and I wished him tenfold powers of resistance. His strength, however, at length failed him. The inhuman monster dragged him out of the pew along the pavement, and would probably have carried him in this manner out of the church, when the injured and defenceless victim kicked at him. While his legs were raised the villain struck him a severe blow, and was about to repeat it, when, no longer able to restrain my feelings, I called out, with an audible voice, "Don't strike

“ the boy.” The congregation arose, the fellow dropped his cane, and, with a disconcerted countenance, passed the pew in which I sat, observing in a low tone, that he was a bad boy. I replied, by telling him, that he ought to be ashamed of himself for using him in such a manner. The little fellow got up, and, with cheeks reddening with shame, and looks of surly defiance, marched victorious into the pew. The audience became composed, the sermon continued, and all again was quiet! This incident will undoubtedly be considered by many as trivial and unimportant, but I cannot be of the same opinion. It is not impossible that the severity and injustice with which he was treated may hereafter sink deep into the remembrance of the hapless victim, and the idea of religion constantly connect itself with the idea of tyranny and oppression!

In the evening I was agreeably surprized with a visit from our assistant secretary, who was deputed to order me, instead of returning to town as directed, to proceed to Maidstone so early as possible, where I was assured I should find many friends of Reform. I received the intelligence with pleasure, and prepared to obey the summons. He brought from town a copy of verses, relative to a late disappointment, which I imagine, he thought would afford me considerable entertainment. He was mistaken; they disgusted me, as well

well by their nonsense as by their obscenity. I grieve that such miserable poetry should have been circulated or encouraged. Whatever be the merits of the case, or however hardly I may perhaps have been treated, I still love the object of my misfortunes, and any thing which can disturb *her* tranquility is an outrage on *my* feelings and an insult upon my understanding ! This is a digression at which the more scrupulous reader will be offended, and the less rigid smile. While I acknowledge the justice of merited reproof, I may at least be allowed to observe, that I know not why an author may not, sometimes, unburthen himself of any little weight or uneasiness which presses upon his recollection, if it can thereby tend to lighten his mind, or restore it to its former serenity.

Having troubled the assistant Secretary with a letter to the Society, and taken leave of my hospitable friends, I sat out on foot the next day again for Rochester. I was accompanied part of the way by the brother of the good citizen at whose house I had been accommodated. During our walk, he made many pertinent reflections. He seemed to think that the cause of reform languished, for want of the exertions of those whose property and respectability might ensure universal attention. He lamented the situation of the country, but was of opinion,
that

that little else could be hoped or expected, than from quietly awaiting a *final event*. Again I endeavoured to oppose this unhappy idea. I willingly granted that good might be indirectly produced from evil; but I contended that as we are uncertain of the result of any action, it was always proper to determine, at first, upon the propriety or impropriety of such measure, and having determined, to support or oppose it, in the *first instance*, with the most determined resolution. Whether he were convinced by this species of argument, I know not, for soon taking leave of me at the half-way house on the road, he left me to pursue the remainder of my journey alone. It was just dark when I arrived at Rochester. I immediately went to my old acquaintance, the secretary, he was not then at home. His wife was not a little surprized to see me, and while she was busied in procuring me some refreshment, gave me the following piece of information. That in consequence of the general meeting which had been held at Chatham, a warrant had been issued out against a young man who was present, and who had been accused of having spoken sedition. That the commanding officer also swore vengeance against me. Her husband, she said, and several others, had not been able to do any business that day, so much were they concerned. The young man had absconded, for which they were sorry,

sorry, as they had declared they would have supported him to the utmost of their power. The particulars of this curious occurrence I afterwards learned, and they were nearly as follows. A person had been sent as a spy to the last general meeting. After I had concluded, this citizen, whose name from particular reasons I forbear to mention, rose, and, in the warmth of expression, is reported to have said, that the late bills had been made by a *faction*, he was, therefore, glad that the people had not attended to them. This being carried to the officer of the barracks, he went to the person with whom the young man worked, and who was a shoemaker, and with violent denunciations of vengeance, and the most illiberal invectives, insisted upon his immediately discharging him. His master answered that he had always conducted himself while with him in a satisfactory manner, and was a sober and diligent young man; he did not therefore, wish to part with him. "Then, *damn me*, Sir," said the officer, drawing his sword, "you shall make no more shoes for the barracks." The affrighted tradesman answered, that it would be inconvenient to discharge him, at least till he could provide himself with another; adding this observation, "He's my right arm, Sir." "Then cut him off," was the furious reply of this surly son of Mars. His master finding himself thus disagree-

agreeably situated, called the young man, and giving him half a guinea, ordered him to leave the house. A warrant was immediately issued out, to take him into custody, but he sat off for London, where I have since seen him, and where, I believe, he has found ample amends for his late persecution. I heard the relation of this circumstance not without some emotion. I was sorry that so intelligent and so worthy a young man should have experienced any inconvenience, and that *I* should be the innocent cause; I, also, regretted, that he should have falsely consulted his personal safety by flight or concealment. A mind firm in its principles, and conscious of innocence, ought to be ever prepared for the severest trials, and to consider every spot as alike secure. A meeting of the society was that night to be held at Luton, to take this and other matters into consideration. I resolved to go. "They sent a file of musqueteers on Saturday last, Sir, after you were gone, expecting you would meet again, and will it not be hazardous?" "I will go if they send the devil." The citizens were pleased with my determination. Two of them immediately sat off to procure me a chaise. In the mean time, I went to the library about some little business, directing them to call for me. In less than half an hour, a postchaise with two citizens was at the door. They enquired for me. Two or
three

three officers were at that time in the library. I hurried past them, threw myself into the chaise, and left them in complete astonishment, to know what all this could mean. It was a most beautiful night, but the road through which I passed was very rugged. Several times I expected to be overturned, but my mind was too much occupied by the present occurrences, to attend to such trifling considerations. I arrived at Luton, where a number of persons were waiting for me. Their zeal was conspicuous; their friendship unequivocal; they contended who should pay the expence of the chaise, and were profuse in their demonstrations of joy.

The business of the evening commenced with taking into consideration the late circumstances, when after a few preliminary observations, a string of resolutions were unanimously carried, and ordered to be printed. After the resolutions had passed, I rose to address them. Two soldiers, probably from curiosity, just then entered the room. The sight of a red coat might perhaps excite an idea of military despotism. There was a general cry of "Turn them out; no soldiers!" accompanied, I believe with hisses. I interposed, and requested they might be allowed to remain. Happily I succeeded, and had the pleasure of

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addressing them in common with the rest of the members. I saw them moved, and have reason to hope that the impressions they that night received will never be wholly obliterated. Mutual good will and fellowship now took place; peace and harmony reigned amongst the whole assembly; the soldiers drank to the company by the title of Citizens, and received in return the endearing appellation of Citizen Soldiers. It was not till after I had sung "Go, George, we can't endure ye," at which the soldiers smiled, and jogged each other, and "the Days we now possess," and till it was nearly one o'clock in the morning, that I was suffered to retire from my officious and very good natured friends.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

BY the time I had risen the next morning, a wealthy miller, who had been present the preceding evening, came to the inn where I slept to enquire after my health. I thanked him for his obliging enquiries, and we sat down together to breakfast. The bread was very brown, but the landlord observed it was the best that could be obtained, adding, with a morose accent, that if things continued much longer in their present state we might perhaps get no bread at all! The miller, during breakfast, amused me with an account of our general meeting at Copenhagen House, at which he was present, and where he obligingly told me “ he “ had the pleasure of seeing me shake my black “ locks.” He was not the only one, as I have before mentioned, who travelled from Kent to be present upon this occasion. He seemed to be very accurate in his recollection of the observation, “ *that in a twelve-months time the Minister might “ perhaps be brought to the scaffold.*” Warm or intemperate expressions, I observe, make a forcible

impression on the memory, and the words "*acquitted Felons,*" "*killed off,*" and "*Swinish Multitude,*" will be remembered much longer than their authors may be apt to imagine! After breakfast he accompanied me part of my way; and ascending an eminence, where some sheep were browsing, and upon which stood a house and a mill, "There," said he, "Citizen, is my little habitation, where I shall be proud to offer you a hearty welcome." The reader may already have formed an opinion that he was a *friendly*, but I have to observe that he was also a *humane* man. He had tenants, who were unable to pay their rents; "but 'tis to no purpose," added he, with a sigh, "for me to distress them: I must wait till better times, for at present they can scarcely procure for themselves the bare necessaries of life!" I heartily joined with him in the last declaration of the propriety in this case of a little delay, though we both agreed that there are some *particular occasions* in which to wait even a single moment must be highly dangerous, and to neglect an opportunity would be criminal and base!

Having placed me in the road to Chatham, he left me, after renewing his expressions of friendship, and observing, that as he sometimes came to town, he should certainly enquire after the good
citizens

citizens, of whom he had heard so much. "Mean-
 "while," said he, shaking my hand, "I heartily
 "with the next time we meet *we may all of us*
 "*meet for an effectual purpose.*" What purpose
 he could mean I leave the sagacious reader or the
 Attorney General to divine. If the purpose were
good, I care not how soon; if *bad*, I understood
 not his meaning, and must wait for a future expla-
 nation. He was a worthy and intelligent man;
 I therefore parted from him with regret, and
 whenever I call to mind the past scenes of my po-
 litical peregrinations, I do not forget the honest
 miller of Luton!

I was now left alone to survey the beautiful pro-
 spect which presented itself around, and to enjoy
 my own meditations. The sun had already counted
 three hours on heaven's diary, and was travelling
 on in his career with jocund gaiety. The sky was
 serene, and scarcely was the blue ætherial space
 sullied with a single cloud. The hills of the sur-
 rounding county seemed to rear their proud, aspir-
 ing heads, and the pure Medway, with its silver
 stream, gently meandered through the verdant
 meads, and watered the fruitful valley. The drum
 and fife, with merry note, calling the soldiers from
 their barracks to the morning parade, resounded
 through the village, and shook the distant air with
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tremulous vibrations. The purity of the atmosphere, and the beauty of the prospect, while they gratified the opening senses, courted the brightest effusions of a warm imagination. I stood on an eminence, commanding an extensive view of the whole; and, gazing with rapture on the charming scene, felt myself, like Obidah in the Rambler, "incited by hope, and animated with desire." As I stood, wrapt in meditation, methought I saw the earth, in slow and solemn majesty, perform it's diurnal motion. I was stricken with the sublime idea. "The Universe, with all it's vast machinery," I cried, "is constant and invariable in all it's operations, and performs it's evolutions with exact regularity; and why should man alone, the admiration of the world, exhibit an instance of instability and caprice? Principles, which should be with him a settled rule of action, to guide him through existence, and promote the general happiness, are sacrificed and polluted at the shrine of interested ambition; narrow policy has complicated and confounded the separate qualities of good and evil, and nature's chief delight and glory is, by his own unaccountable perversity, become her chief disgrace!"

About three o'clock in the afternoon of this day I sat out in the coach for Maidstone, at which
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place I arrived about six o'clock. I immediately went to the person to whom I had been recommended, and who had shewn himself particularly anxious for this visit. He had expected me on Monday, and invited some friends to receive me; but some particular business requiring his presence at Gravesend, he had set off for that place on Tuesday morning. His father and brother, however, received me with polite civility, and requested me to spend the evening with them. From the conversation which passed between the visitors who were present, I learned that Maidstone was a divided place; that party ran so high that many of the neighbours would not traffic with those who were of opposite opinions; and that the going into a tavern frequented by different parties might subject a man to the hazard of being turned out, or at least insulted! The Castle Inn was reputed to be a house for Jacobins, and the Star Coffeehouse was, I believe, the rendezvous of Aristocracy! A young gentleman related to me a whimsical circumstance which befel him during the time I was there, and of the truth of which I do not doubt. At an assembly which lately happened, he applied to a young lady to dance with him: she refused, with this extraordinary remark, "I perceive, Sir, "from your hair (he was a *crop*), that your principles are different from mine; I must, therefore, "decline

“decline the honour you intend.” He was a young man, possessed of property, and of a pleasing address; but the cruel aristocrat was relentless, and he was obliged to go and reap his harvest in a more fertile and less stubborn soil! That the ladies should become politicians I do not wonder, nor do I repine; but it is the first time, I confess, that I ever knew they gave themselves any very serious concern about either the *outside* or the *inside* of a gentleman’s head!

I slept this evening at the Castle Inn, and the next morning was busied in writing letters, and receiving visits from several of the inhabitants. In the afternoon two gentlemen accompanied me to Mr. C—— T——, who received me with great politeness, and with whom I spent the evening. We found him busily engaged in his paper manufactory, the wheel of which is very large, and, I believe, of his own construction. He appears to be a worthy and sensible man, and a strenuous friend to reform. He intimated that Administration threatened to put him to considerable trouble and expence at the next election. As he has, however, been nearly thirty years a representative of Maidstone, and has been uniform in his principles, I hope he will be returned. The opinion of the county, indeed, is very much changed within
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these few years, which may be partly ascribed to the present ruinous war, but chiefly to the two late Convention Bills, which excited a general odium through the country, and which was not a little heightened by the pitiful manœuvres which were in various places practised to counteract and prevent their petition!

At Chatham, Commissioner Proby, it is said, called together all the workmen (near seventeen hundred in number) of the dock-yard, and desired them to sign their names to an Address to his Majesty, congratulating him on his late happy escape, and praying him to pass the Bills. By a singular circumstance, however, the men unanimously declared they would not sign away their liberties, and, rushing out of the yard in a body, went to the place where a Petition against the Convention Bills laid, and every one of them instantly subscribed his name!

At Rochester, the Right Reverend Prelate of that place had the honour of being carried in solemn procession, not indeed in person, but in what was *perhaps* of equal consequence, in effigy, by a vast concourse of persons, about the town. A label was fixed upon his breast with the following words, which he is said to have delivered in the

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House of Lords, "*The People have nothing to do with the Laws but to obey them!*" In one of his hands was placed a Bible, and in the other a lighted taper; and in this manner, after having been shewn to the minor canons, every one of whom was obliged to open his door and contemplate the curious sight, he was led into a large field, and committed to the flames, amidst the loud acclamations of the surrounding multitude!

At the County Meeting at Maidstone, Earl Stanhope, with several other patriotic persons, were drawn in triumph, in a large waggon, whence his lordship had harangued the populace; while Lord Sydney, who had come down to take an active part in promoting what is called the loyal Address, with the rest of the ministerial party, were obliged to shrink away, amidst general hisses and execrations! This little remnant retired to an adjoining tavern, where they patched up a smuggled Address, and had afterwards the insolence to call it *the sense of the county of Kent!* Sir Edward Knatchbull may declare what he pleases in the House of Commons. *There*, perhaps, it may not be of such consequence to misrepresent or deceive: he may rise, as I one evening saw him, and, with his usual perspicuity and grammatical propriety, say, "Mr. Speaker, I rise, Sir;—I don't rise, Sir,
 " —to

“ —to convey the *most slightest* imputation on my “ worthy colleague, Mr. Filmer Honeywood,” — and then proceed to relate the story of the Bishop’s bonfire; but Sir Edward should recollect, that at the county meeting an observation was made and loudly applauded, “ that the ministerial “ members had *forfeited the confidence of the people of Kent.*” This is no slight imputation. It is a serious and solemn charge; and Sir Edward would do well to study a little grammar and common sense before he ventures to undertake an explanation!

I took leave of Mr. T——, who kindly wished me health and prosperity. Upon my departure, I asked him if he thought there would be any impropriety in my addressing the inhabitants at the Castle Inn upon the subject of Reform. He answered in the negative, and wished me success. In the evening I was introduced to a select company, of somewhat less than fifty, of the most respectable inhabitants of the town, Mr. James S——, the brother of Mr. T——, in the chair. I was received with great civility, and after having delivered my letter of introduction, I addressed them upon the necessity of an immediate Reform.— After I had concluded, the company unanimously

came to a resolution of forming themselves into a Society, for the purpose of endeavouring to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments. Mr. S—— took me home with him, and requested me to accept of accommodations at his house during the time I should remain at Maidstone, with which friendly invitation I readily complied. I here spent two or three of the most pleasant days of my life. The generous hospitality of my worthy friend, and the honest sincerity with which he avowed his sentiments, deserve no common praise. I lament my inability to do him justice, though I am certain he wants no other approbation than that of his own heart! Should this trifle ever fall into his hands, he will see that I am not wholly insensible to former acts of kindness, and may perhaps be inclined to think with me, that to acknowledge benefits received is partly to deserve them!

On the next evening I again met a numerous assembly at the Castle, where I entered into a concise history of the London Corresponding Society, recounted the various sufferings of the persecuted patriots, and explained the nature of their institutions and regulations. They appointed the following Monday for a general meeting, to consider of the

the best means of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform. The day following I received a letter from the Executive Committee, requesting me to be in town on Monday, and a note from an inhabitant of Rochester, acquainting me that a party of citizens were coming to see me, and would be glad to meet me at the Castle. In the evening I attended a meeting for the last time, and after some preliminary observations, concluded with reading an account of the proceedings at Copenhagen House. The next day I visited the paper manufactory belonging to Mr. S——, which is very considerable, and which employs several hands. I observed that the continual moisture of the atmosphere must render it very unhealthy for those who were employed. He answered in the affirmative; but asked the usual question, What are men to do who are in want? Why it's very true.—Want is the parent of severity, and cruel necessity urges many to neglect even health and improvement to obtain the bare means of subsistence! He observed to me that his men were all *citizens*, which, he said, was no wonder, as their wages were less, and the price of provisions greater than ever. The water wheel, which urged the motion of his mill, was ingenious and well constructed; it had one inconvenience, however, and which, I believe,

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is frequent, that of throwing up the water behind. He has expended a considerable sum upon his manufactory, and is a very worthy and industrious man. I was sorry, therefore, to hear him intimate an intention of emigrating to America. I hope he will desist from his purpose, and remain in England. Whatever be the form of government, or the abuses of administration, or however corrupt or degraded the national representation, it is still our country, and it is our duty to exert our utmost, both to reform its errors and defend its rights. We are connected to it by the soft ties of general sympathy, and the habits of local prejudice. Our tempers, our language, and our dispositions, all are English. Its soil is rich—it's climate healthy—it's atmosphere serene; and England, if a free and independent country, would be the best in which an Englishman could with honour and with safety reside!

I need but just mention, to avoid the appearance of ingratitude, that I spent the remainder of Saturday, and the whole of Sunday, at the house of an intelligent person, who had unfortunately lost his voice by his patriotic exertions at the last county meeting, where I met a small party; and on Monday morning, having taken leave of my
kind

kind friends, whom I hope once again to see, and of whose exertions in the cause of reform I am very anxious to hear, I sat off in the coach for Rochester, at which place I arrived about twelve o'clock at noon.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

I HAD but just time to take a little breakfast, when the coach was at the door. I leaped into it, and with a sigh bade adieu to Maidstone and all its pleasures! The snow had fallen very heavily during the night, and the weather was exceedingly cold. The company at first consisted only of an elderly gentleman, whom at that time I did not know, but whom I afterwards found to be a farmer of considerable property, who had long wished to see me. We afterwards stopt to take up a young lady, of an agreeable person and lively manners. Our conversation, as usual with Englishmen, commenced with the weather, and, as was very natural at that period, changed to the consideration of the very high price of provisions. Our fair companion was a democrat, and seemed to speak with earnestness on the subject. It happened that our conversation continued on the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform, when, turning to me, "I understand, Sir," said she, "that Mr. Jones is just arrived at Maidstone." Unwilling to take
advan-

advantage of her ignorance of me, I immediately answered, by acquainting her that *I* was the person she meant. She blushed deeply. Recovering herself, however, from the little confusion into which she had been thrown by this unexpected declaration, she answered, with a smile, "I assure you, Sir, I was not going to say any thing unfavourable of you." I believed it; nevertheless I thought it right to assure her, that it would have been unpleasant for me to have sat silent to hear either praise or abuse, without having the power of advancing my own opinion, or taking a part in the conversation. Before I quitted the coach, they both did me the honour to say, that they should hereafter remember with satisfaction the agreeable morning they had spent. I shall remember it too, but with sensations of a mixed and opposite nature; because, whatever pleasure I may experience in the presence and conversation of an agreeable young lady and an entertaining companion, it but too constantly connects itself with the idea of some certain circumstances which it would perhaps be better for me to forget!

I once more arrived at Rochester, where I found the inhabitants in a bustle. The bread had been raised, and the soldiers were obliged to pay three halfpence a pound more for their meat. This had

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strongly excited their displeasure. A poor man had that morning been taken into custody who had deserted ten years ago. I suppose his treatment will be unusually severe, for our laws still continue to affix heavy penalties upon men for what they have *formerly* done, and not for what they may *hereafter* commit: Punishment is used as a preventative, and the consequence is considered instead of the cause!

In the afternoon I visited a young medical friend at Chatham, who was lately married. I found him happy in the possession of an amiable and virtuous woman. He welcomed me to his habitation, and I enjoyed with him and his beauteous bride a most pleasant and rational evening's entertainment. His remarks upon political subjects were few, but they were solid. He deprecated and dreaded the idea of a political convulsion; yet he foresaw and expected one. He avowed himself a friend of Reform, yet wished, if a crisis *should unfortunately take place*, that there might then be *a plan*, and not *plans*, submitted to the consideration of the people. Unanimity of sentiment and a perfect co-operation of principle, he deemed essentially necessary, to prevent the possibility of splitting into separate parties and subsequent factions. I heartily agree with him, and unless the majority of the nation will make
haste

haste and come forward with a more efficacious and less objectionable plan of Reform, than has hitherto been offered to the public, I must be excused for adhering to my first opinions, and ranging myself under those solid and substantial principles, Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments! His Lady was a disciple of equality, and had studied Mrs. Wolstonecroft's Rights of Women. "A female legislature, Sir, would never have passed those horrid Convention Bills, or abrogated the dear prerogative of speech!" There was nothing, she thought, to which women were not competent; and she strongly censured our sex, for first depriving them of every source of intelligence, and then reproaching them for their levity and indiscretion! She had truth and reason on her side; I, therefore, heartily concurred in the justice of her remarks. I believe we might as well have a cabinet of tea drinkers, as an administration of drunkards; and it would certainly be better to witness a complete representation of the *School for Scandal*, than be present at the performance of the *Devil to pay*!

The next day at noon, I sat off for Gravesend, in what is termed the tide coach. The inside passengers consisted of a soldier and a poor man and his wife, who had that morning walked from Gravesend to Chatham upon some particular business, and

being overpowered with vexation and fatigue; determined, although their finances were almost exhausted, to treat themselves with a ride. There was a wild desperation in their manner and conversation, which betokened that their hearts were but ill at ease. It evinced itself by significant shrugs and shrewd insinuations. They looked at their own clothes, "which to be sure," they said, "were "indifferent," "but what then," added the woman, with a faint smile which concealed internal anguish, "we are honest, and pay for what we "have; can every body say so much? Provisions "are now so dear, that a poor family can scarcely "live, and those who are often obliged to go with- "out a meal, can seldom spare much for the de- "coration of their outside! my poor husband "labours from morning till night, and all to very "little purpose." She looked mournfully at him, with tears just starting into her eyes. "He was "too ill to walk," added she, "and why should "not *poor* folks sometimes ride, as well as *other* "people?" I know not by what mechanical impulse I was urged, but I involuntarily held out my hand and condoled with him. "You are a good "man," said he, with a sigh. "I fear not, friend," I replied, "and yet I wish to see my fellow crea- "tures happy." Encouraged by my manner the woman for a while forgot all her caution, and
launched

launched into a string of invectives against London, which, she said, was a great sink of corruption ! “ Temple-Bar groans for a great many heads,” &c. I was shocked at her violence, but I readily forgave her, when I considered the irritation of mind under which she laboured, and which naturally seeks to vent itself by such forcible and unguarded expressions !

Among other little vexations which they were obliged to undergo, was one which to the majority of my readers may appear somewhat ludicrous. To soften the fatigues of their journey they had indulged themselves in the purchase of some spirit, I believe it might be gin, and the poor man had carefully deposited it in his pocket. The cork, however, which confined this precious fluid, had slipped out, and almost the whole of the liquor escaped. The piteous look with which our unfortunate companion surveyed his almost empty bottle, and the peculiar earnestness with which he described the cause of this catastrophe, could not but provoke a smile. It was a heavy disappointment. Every thing seemed to conspire against them. I shared in their misfortunes, and felt equally with them the terrible calamity which had befallen them. My resolution was fixed, and so soon as the coachman had stopped on the road, the two passengers leaving
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the coach, for some little refreshment, I took the opportunity of putting into the woman's hand the amount of both their fares. She took it, and at first seemed lost in speechless surprize. At length, recovering herself, she would fain have overwhelmed me with a volubility of thanks. I requested her to forbear ; a trifle like that, was not worth such superfluous acknowledgments. She then began to apologise for the intemperate language she had used. " Though I disapprove your violence," I replied, " yet I hope you will never be afraid nor ashamed " of declaring your real sentiments." It is false that human nature is depraved or ungrateful ! If there be any thing to lament, it is, that it is too often disposed to place implicit confidence, or make unnecessary concessions. I hope, in recording this little transaction, I shall not appear to have been actuated by vanity or egotism, I did but my duty, and whatever were my motive, I freely acknowledge that I experience considerable pleasure in its retrospection.

The soldier who accompanied us recounted his life and adventures. He had been originally trapped into the service, and sent to the West Indies. At first, he said, he did not like it, but at present he was tolerably well contented ; for he observed that he had plenty of victuals and drink ; " which

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“is more,” added he, “than I could get, if I were “not in the army.” The woman here interrupted him. “My husband too was *japanned*.” She immediately made him take off his wig to shew me a large scar, which was on the fore part of his head. He had fallen from one of the decks of a vessel into the hold, and had fractured his skull, for which he was obliged to be trepanned. It had weakened and almost destroyed the optic nerve of one of his eyes. He informed me that he followed the business of a watch-case finisher, and that on a Sunday his wife took a broom, and by sweeping the roads near Islington, contrived to get a few halfpence of the passing travellers. He had come down from London the preceding evening, in a Gravesend boat, “and, because I was old and helpless,” said he, “the passengers jeered me, and took off my “wig.” I have often heard of the levity and vulgarity of a Gravesend boat, but I never yet knew that it was usual to insult age and infirmity. I hope that our mariners and vessels will soon experience a material improvement, and that an old man may hereafter be permitted to pursue his journey, calm and unmolested.

We were now arrived at Gravesend, where having bidden adieu to my fellow travellers, and taken a little refreshment with my former friend and acquaintance,

quaintance, I hastened to the coach, which was waiting to convey me to London. As I entered, my friend exclaimed, "Good bye, citizen," which I repeated. "*Citizen* too," said a gentleman in the corner of the coach; "I don't like that word."

"Perhaps not, Sir; it is possible you may not understand its meaning. When *I* use it, I wish to convey the idea of a sincere friend and an affectionate brother." "In *that* sense, Sir, it is certainly unexceptionable." "In what other sense can you use it? The original meaning I believe was simply an inhabitant or resident of some particular place, and surely no one need be ashamed of acknowledging the town or country where he may happen to have been born." The gentleman was silent. Another of the company here resumed the discourse. "A curious expedient, Sir, of the French, to put in requisition all the young men of such an age." "A very good one, in my opinion," I replied, "and I think it would be a fortunate thing, if every man in every country, understood the use and exercise of arms." "Do you mean to allude to *this* country?" asked a young man with apparent eagerness. "I spoke of every country, Sir, and of course included *this*." But for *what purpose* should they learn the use of arms, Sir?" "To defend their liberties, and resist oppression!" "Do you

“ you allude to *this* country, when you speak of “ *oppression*, Sir?” “ I have already observed, that “ I allude to no one in particular.” The conversation immediately turned upon the number of disaffected persons, who were supposed to be in *this* country, and on the benefit which would accrue to the nation, if they would leave it; which, as it bore no reference to what I had advanced, I did not condescend to answer.

We arrived about seven in the evening at the inn in London, where the young man who had thus questioned me, being left alone with me at tea, apologised for his seeming rudeness, by informing me, that he was a friend of Reform, though before strangers he was unwilling to declare himself, but that hearing me express those sentiments, he felt his curiosity strongly excited. I related to him who I was, and of my late Tour, and before we parted, perceiving he wanted information, I put into his hands Mr. Longley’s sensible pamphlet, entitled “ a Sketch for a more equal Representation of the “ People of England,” which I cannot but strongly recommend, both to the friends and to the enemies of Parliamentary Reform.

I have now brought this first part of my late political Tour to a conclusion. I am sensible that much of

it will appear to many as trivial and unimportant, and much of it superfluous. To those, however, who feel anxious to be acquainted with the particulars of a project which is novel in its nature, and which has certainly given some little alarm to administration, it will not prove wholly unentertaining. It may perhaps serve to shew the relative difference of sentiment in different places; since what was considered as laudable, or at least harmless, in Kent, has from the prejudices and passions of certain individuals, been construed into a high crime and misdemeanor in the county of Warwick.

JOHN GALE JONES.

END OF THE FIRST PART.

APPENDIX.

Copy of the Letter of Introduction, from the London Corresponding Society to the Country Societies.

Committee Room, February, 1796.

CITIZENS,

THIS letter is to introduce Citizen —— to you, he being deputed by us to visit your society. He will lay before you the instructions we have given him for his conduct, whereby you will see the principal parts of our view of the common object which unites us to you and to the other popular societies in the country. We hope they accord with your sentiments, for we are persuaded that nothing is wanting to obtain such a Reform in Parliament as we demand, but a strict union among those who are already convinced of

it's necessity. We are not, however, to condemn or neglect those whose interest, whose passions, or whose ignorance have set them in opposition to us. For those who are separated from us only by their ignorance, we shall gain them daily to our side, by a clear statement of our claims. The proposition we maintain is so simple, that no one can reject it who possesses even an ordinary share of understanding. The political creeds which men are taught during their childhood frequently warp their minds. But in Britain, the first article of the political creed is, that every individual who is subject to government is represented, and has a right to be represented, in the legislature. We assert no more, than that the practice does not at present correspond with the theory, and we claim no more than the restitution of these our rights. For those who have partial interests and passions to gratify in the continuance of abuses, we must contend with them firmly. If we can soften their opposition, it is our duty; and if we cannot, on their own heads be the guilt and the effect.

Citizens, let us redouble our zeal. Indifference in any cause belonging to humanity is base; in this, it is nothing less than insanity,

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We recommend our deputy to your confidence,
for we believe he is worthy of it.

Wishing you success in the glorious cause of
liberty and humanity, we conclude.

(By order of the Committee)

J. ASHLEY, Secretary.

*Instructions of the London Corresponding
Society to Citizen John Gale Jones, de-
puted to visit the Societies at Rochester,
&c.*

CITIZEN,

THE Society having resolved that deputies be sent to the several societies in correspondence with us, in order to inform them accurately of the present state of the important question agitated by them and us, and to consult with them on the most effectual means of convincing the people of this country of the necessity of a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament, we have chosen you to be among the number of such deputies, having a firm confidence that you will conduct yourself so as to bring no just reproach upon us your constituents. To acquit ourselves, however, before the whole nation in this momentous concern, so well as the better to enable you to prosecute our legal and virtuous purpose, we furnish you with the following instructions, from which we conjure you in no case to depart.

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1st. On your admission to a society in union with us, you shall deliver the Letter of Introduction given you herewith, and submit these instructions to their perusal, in order that no improper person, being either an ignorant advocate of our cause, or a base pretender for mischievous purposes, may intrude himself upon such society in our name.

2dly. You shall state precisely to such society, that the sole object of our association is a reform in the Commons House of Parliament.

3dly. You shall insist, that the only effectual, so well as the only legitimate mode of obtaining our common object, is by convincing our fellow citizens of our natural and constitutional right to such reform, and of the necessity of our obtaining it, to preserve the nation from falling under the yoke of an absolute despotism. In so doing, you cannot fail to draw the nation over to our side, and to leave the enemies of reform narrowed to the circle of corrupt ministers and their rapacious dependants.

4thly. You shall shew, that the new Treason and Sedition Bills, whatever be the character that will be stamp'd on them by posterity, have not taken
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away the means of enlightening our fellow citizens on the above subject, since, under these acts, citizens may assemble to the number of forty-nine in one place, to converse in an orderly manner on their constitutional rights, and cannot therefore be disturbed without a violation of law, even as it is at present.

5thly. As the subtle malice of our enemies will endeavour to lead our fellow citizens from the peaceable course which it yet becomes us to pursue, you shall invite the society to guard against all persons who would introduce violent propositions, or any illegal measures.

6thly. It behoves you, notwithstanding, to convince the timid that no fears are to be entertained respecting the legal consequences of the information of spies, since the security of the friends of reform is in the legality of their object and proceedings.

7thly. The design of the above articles is to remove their apprehensions relative to the safety of our association under the new laws. This part of your mission effected, you are to strain every power of your mind to awaken the sleeping spirit of liberty; you are to call upon our fellow citizens to be

be ready with us, to pursue our common object, if it must be, to the scaffold, or rather (if our enemies are desperate enough to bar up every avenue to enquiry and discussion) to the field, at the hazard of extermination; convinced that no temper less decided than this will suffice to regain liberty from a bold and usurping faction. But to the end that we may succeed by the irresistible voice of the people, you are to excite in every society the desire which animates our bosoms, to embrace the nation as brethren, and the resolution to bear every repulse from passion and prejudice which fails to deprive us of the secure grounds of argument.

8thly. As the Whig Club have called upon the people to associate for the repeal of the new Treason and Sedition Acts, without making any explicit declaration of their principles, we recommend you to caution the society you visit against every attempt to divert their thoughts from our ultimate object, to such temporary and subordinate considerations.

9thly. You shall, if called upon, aid the society with your advice in forming their internal regulations; but by no means shall attempt to impose any rule upon them, much less to intrude the par-

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ticular parts of our constitution, where local considerations may make it prudent to adopt others.

10thly. You shall invite the society to a close correspondence with us, and to transmit to us a monthly report, containing their numbers, and a concise account of their leading transactions.

11thly. You shall invite the society to take the name of the United Corresponding Society of _____, and to adopt our regulations, so far as may be consistent with their particular convenience.

12thly. This society being involved in great expence, and being in actual arrear, you shall, in an open and manly manner, invite the society to contribute to the expence of the deputation, according to their ability, and to transmit their contribution, through your hands, to our secretary.

13thly. You shall write to us immediately after your first interview with the society, and at least once a week afterwards; and if any thing should occur to which these instructions do not apply, you shall write to us especially on the subject. In a word, you are always to reflect that you are wrestling with the enemies of the human race, not for yourself

yourself merely, for you may not see the full day of liberty, but for the child hanging on the breast; and that the question, whether the next generation shall be free or not, may greatly depend on the wisdom and integrity of your conduct in the generous mission which you and your fellow deputies now take upon yourselves.

14thly. As our letters have been frequently intercepted by our enemies, before your departure from London, you shall learn of the citizen secretary the place to which you shall direct your letters, and shall establish with the society a proper channel for corresponding with us.

Citizen, while you recommend a legal conduct to the society, we solemnly call upon you to be yourself the example of sobriety, both of conversation and manners.

(By order of the Executive Committee)

J. ASHLEY, Secretary,

*Extract of a Letter to Citizen Ashley.**Rochester, Feb. 16. 1796.*

DEAR CITIZEN,

AS the time fixed by the Committee for my return is near at hand, and my leisure for writing not very considerable, I must content myself for the present with a brief recapitulation of the leading events which have occurred subsequent to my last letter, reserving a fuller and more circumstantial detail till I see you in town. I feel the more strongly inclined to this from the uncertainty I am in whether this will ever reach you, as I have not yet received any letter from the society, nor indeed from any other persons, through the medium of the post.

On Tuesday evening I visited a general meeting of the society at the Falstaff, a medical man from Gillingham being in the chair. After the usual introductory forms, I addressed them for about an hour and a half, wherein I gave them a history of the various sufferings and persecutions of the friends of reform, recounted their triumphs and successes, &c. and concluded with recommending them to imitate their firmness and perseverance, and not to be deterred by the dangers and difficulties

ties which might await them in their undertaking. Their conduct and sentiments were worthy of themselves. They rose with one accord, and with great enthusiasm professed their determination *to live and die united with the London Corresponding Society.*

Take the following, if you please, from memory, as an imperfect specimen.—“ I come, Citizens, in
 “ the serious and solemn character of a Representa-
 “ tive of the London Corresponding Society, to
 “ make known to you our principles, and receive
 “ your determination. I come to ask if you are
 “ prepared to act in concert and union with that
 “ society, in every possible case which it shall judge
 “ necessary for the purpose of obtaining our rights
 “ and redressing our grievances? (All, all, was the cry.) “ I wish to know, whether you are *men*
 “ or willing slaves? (*Men*, they exclaimed.)—
 “ Whether you prefer to pine in indolence and
 “ discontent, or to associate and be free! Is the
 “ undaunted spirit of your brave ancestors extin-
 “ guished, and their blood contaminated, or are
 “ you still determined to exert the same distin-
 “ guished energy which in their days preserved our
 “ Rights and Liberties, and procured us that
 “ freedom of representation, which is the only se-
 “ curity you have from the encroachments of
 “ absolute despotism, and which it is your duty to
 “ regain

“ regain for yourselves and transmit to succeeding generations.”

It is impossible for me to do more than give you a faint sketch of what passed, nor would it, indeed be delicate to record transactions in which I was so materially concerned. I shall only, therefore, observe, that on the succeeding evening, I attended their Committee of Delegates, and offered them some advice relative to their internal regulations, and on Friday attended a general meeting at Chatham. May I say, it was *very numerously attended*? I again addressed them, and endeavoured to give an accurate account of our regulations, and to explain the meaning and enforce the necessity of Universal Suffrage, &c. It was with considerable pleasure I perceived a numerous collection of farmers, many of whom I could name as being very wealthy, and what is most extraordinary, *they* are (if it may so be called) more violent in their invectives against administration than all the rest. Many strangers entered as members that night, and without meaning to infer any thing like an observation of personal vanity or presumption, I hope I may be permitted to say, that *the sending of a deputy from our Society has, if I am not mistaken, awakened the whole county of Kent to a sense of its situation, and to a determination to assert its Rights.* Indeed they
already

already begin to talk about the expediency of a large public county meeting, and five wealthy householders have signified their readiness to subscribe their names and residence. This is so joyful a theme, that methinks I could go on for ever, but my paper reminds me that I am near a conclusion ; I must, therefore, only briefly observe, that on Saturday I supped with a party of citizens—on Sunday I met them at the Falstaff—on Monday I went over to Gillingham to assist in forming a new division—on Tuesday went on board the *Ville-de Paris*, dined in one of the French prison ships, and conversed with the prisoners. The Officer is a friend to Reform, and a deserving young man. In the evening attended another division, assisted in its organization, and proposed regulations.

JOHN GALE JONES.

Thursday Noon.

P.S. I have hitherto been unmolested. The spies are hissed and hooted wherever they appear ; and the inhabitants of every class, from the mayor to the peasant, treat me with kindness, condescension and civility.

Thursday, February 22d. 1796.

“ AT a general meeting of the United Corresponding Societies of Rochester, Chatham and Brompton, the following resolutions were proposed and unanimously agreed to.

“ Resolved,

“ Resolved,

“ I. That the united Corresponding Societies of Rochester, Chatham and Brompton, *are firmly resolved to act in concert with, and pursuant to the principles of the London Corresponding Society !*

“ II. That citizen———from the time of his first being a member to the present period, has deserved the esteem and confidence of the united Corresponding Society.

“ III. That this Society, therefore, feels itself called upon to support and assist him, so far as may be reasonably expected, during the dangers and difficulties of his present situation.

“ IV. *That being fully convinced of the absolute necessity of an immediate Reform in the Commons House of Parliament, and conscious of the justice of their cause, these Societies will persevere in the avowal of these sentiments, and the propagation of these principles, even though it should be at the hazard of their lives !!*

“ V. Resolved unanimously, that the foregoing resolutions be signed by the Chairman and Secretary and inserted in the Kentish Journals.

————CHAIRMAN.

————SECRETARY.

FINIS.

*Extract of a Letter to the Executive
Committee.*

CITIZENS, *Gravesend.*

ENCLOSED you will find a letter from the United Corresponding Societies of Rochester, Brompton, and Chatham, where they explain their sentiments, and propose their plan of organization. They promise to contribute with alacrity and zeal. As I have received your order to proceed to Maidstone, I shall set out on my journey so early as possible. I arrived at this place on Saturday afternoon, and took up my abode with Citizen ———, where I at present reside. He received me with that warm and generous friendship which is, or ever ought to be, the distinguishing characteristic of a good citizen. I enquired concerning the number and disposition of the friends of Liberty, and find there are many; but they seem much in want of advice and regulations. In the evening, Citizen ——— went and summoned a meeting; and although it was an inconvenient day (being Saturday), and the notice very short, about fifty persons were assembled at the George before eight o'clock. I had the pleasure of addressing them for about an hour, and after expatiating upon the necessity of an immediate association, had the satis-

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faction, upon my conclusion, of seeing sixteen new members made. They wish for another meeting; but my time being limited, I was unable to promise them: they declare, that if my arrival were generally known, *almost all Gravesend would assemble*. I have experienced the most friendly treatment.

JOHN GALE JONES.

22d Feb. 1796.

Castle Inn, Maidstone.

AT a meeting of the inhabitants it was unanimously resolved, that a general meeting of the friends of Parliamentary Reform should be convened on Monday next, to consider of certain propositions, and of the best means of obtaining Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments.

J. S——, Chairman.

24th Feb. 1796.

Copy of a Letter to Mrs. D——.

DEAR MADAM,

You will perhaps be surprized, but I am sure not offended, that I take this opportunity to enquire after your welfare, and acquaint you with my
present

present situation. The interest which your family and yourself have always taken in whatever have materially concerned me, and the long intimacy which has subsisted between us, will render an epistle from me not wholly uninteresting or unacceptable. It is my earnest desire, and it must be my duty, to preserve in remembrance a just sense of former friendship, by present acknowledgments and future exertions. I have often wished, that, amidst the numerous acquaintances with which I have been surrounded, I could discover and select a female correspondent and a friendly adviser. Your long acquaintance with misfortune, generous susceptibility, and acute discernment, have fully convinced me that you are admirably calculated to afford consolation and impart advice. A well cultivated mind, joined to a sober cast of thought, are perhaps among the noblest acquisitions of human nature; and I am not afraid of being suspected of flattery when I assert that Mrs. D—— has fully proved her undoubted claim to the former, and her constant and uninterrupted possession of the latter. From a disposition thus attempered and meliorated, how readily might youth learn wisdom and inexperience gain instruction. The novelty of such an undertaking detracts not from its merit, and the purity of the motive is its best security from ignorance or malevolence.

A young

A young man, and early introduced into the world, it has been sometimes my pride, but more frequently, perhaps, my misfortune, to be left too much to the dictates of my own heart, and to the solitary efforts of my own understanding. Comparative observation has often shewn me the wide difference between vice and virtue; and active exertion has painfully struggled to reduce into practice what solid conviction has declared to be truth. Yet am I not happy. In the midst of busy crowds I wander a comfortless mourner; and sad perplexity treads closely in the footsteps of public exertion or private meditation. Is this the ample reward of genius and the proud pre-eminence of virtue? Or can it be said that I have perverted their application or neglected the means? Must bitter misfortune ever await the efforts of the benevolent; and an ardent desire to promote the general happiness ensure only individual misery? Reason would fain refute the melancholy supposition, but experience will calmly decide in the affirmative. Surely it will not always be thus! The efforts of humanity must at length succeed, and truth and justice finally prevail. The arduous task must be undertaken by *some*, and individuals must cheerfully devote themselves for the happiness of a world!

I am at present employed upon a mission at once honourable and important. A visit to the surrounding

rounding towns and cities to discover the strength and numbers of the friends of peace and reform, and to ascertain the real sense of the people of England. It is an awful and solemn undertaking, and well demands a calm and deliberate mind. How far I am qualified for such a purpose, it is not for myself to determine, and it would, perhaps, be fortunate for me to know the unbiassed opinion of others. I fear I possess sufficient vanity to acquit me of incapacity, and have experienced too much flattery to be capable of forming a proper judgment. I would fain hear the truth from lips too pure to utter calumnies or abuse, and too independent to flatter or to fear. I am now at Maidstone, with a very worthy family; believe I shall be in town on Monday, and may, perhaps, personally appear before you, to solicit judgment and confess my faults.

JOHN GALE JONES.

*Copy of a Letter to Mr. J--- S-----, at
Maidstone.*

Birmingham, Friday Night.

DEAR SIR,

I THINK I should be deficient as well in sense as in gratitude, if, after having received such numerous favours from the inhabitants of Maidstone in general, and from yourself in particular, I neglected the first opportunity which offered itself of expressing

pressing my sincere acknowledgments and returning
 my grateful thanks ; and I own I possess vanity
 sufficient to lead me to suppose, that short as was
 my residence, and feeble my exertions, a few hasty
 lines addressed to you will be considered neither
 impertinent nor unwelcome. The few days, in-
 deed, which I passed in your family, and the friend-
 ly treatment I experienced, have almost caused in
 me a degree of weakness which perhaps a wise man
 ought not to feel, and a good man should be
 ashamed to indulge, a vain and useless regret for
 lost time, and a melancholy remembrance of past
 pleasures. Could I flatter myself that the purpose
 for which I visited Maidstone were attained, and
 a general spirit of reformation excited, I believe I
 should feel, as I ought, unmixed and unequivocal
 satisfaction. On you, Sir, as on a ponderous pillar of
 polished marble, I rest with the fondest hopes and
 the most anxious expectation. You have wealth
 —you have influence—you have independence,
 and you have virtue. It is in your power, by a
 judicious and spirited example, to support, in your
 part of the country, the noble edifice of Reform,
 and command the assistance of the patriotic *labour-*
ers of Kent. This is not the artful language of
 flattery : it is the sober dictate of honest truth. It
 is the consequent effect of observation, hastily
 made, I acknowledge, but resulting from a dispo-
 sition tolerably penetrating, and not quite devoid
 of

of the faculty of discernment. The times are critical ; the distresses of our dear country are urgent and alarming. To know the fatal cause, and not assist in providing an adequate and effectual remedy, is to sin against full and complete conviction, and offend beyond all hope or possibility of forgiveness. Some little excuse may reasonably be offered for the brave desperado, or the enterprising knave ; but to sit down in voluntary idleness, to be indolently wicked and passively vicious, is to insult and degrade the dignity of human nature, and offer premiums and passports for arbitrary oppression and successful villainy. It grieves me to the heart to see so many noble minds, and such excellent faculties, suffered to waste and extinguish themselves in idle levity or thoughtless dissipation. To such, the colour of a horse is made a matter of as much consequence as the enslaving of a people ; and the cries of a suffering nation are absorbed and overwhelmed in the loud shouts and clamours of a Newmarket sweepstakes. To talk to persons of this description of equal representation, is to propound logarithms in algebra or trigonometry ; and equal rights and equal laws is to them a subject of as equal consequence and comprehension as the position of Sirius, or the geography of the moon !

I wish neither to be thought proudly arrogant nor unreasonably severe. You will judge of the truth or falshood of what I have advanced, and
draw

draw your own suitable conclusions. I am happy, however, to be able to acknowledge that there are to be found many whose situation, whose abilities, and whose virtues, ornamental in *any*, but transcendantly honourable in *this* important cause, have been strenuously exerted, for the purpose of asserting their own independence, and protecting their country's rights.—May they succeed in their laudable undertaking, and restore universal peace and tranquility! While they live they shall not want the ample tribute of veneration and esteem, and succeeding generations shall gratefully assist to perpetuate their well-earned fame.

You will perceive by the date of this letter that I am at Birmingham, where you will, perhaps, be pleased to hear that I have experienced much friendly civility, and conversed with many advocates of reform. Irresolution and timidity are the chief obstacles against which I have to contend. Yet 'tis a folly to despair. Argument must be advanced, truth stated, and reason employed; and with such a powerful trinity there are few political infidels sufficiently bold, I think, to hazard the combat, or oppose its irresistible influence.

You will be pleased, Sir, to convey my respectful acknowledgments to such of the inhabitants of Maidstone as think me worthy of their remembrance, and to accept for yourself, Mrs. S— and family, the sincere regard and esteem of

JOHN GALE JONES.



